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THOUGHTS ABOUT ART.

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THOUGHTS ABOUT ART.

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BY

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON,

AUTHOR OF "A PAINTER'S CAMP," "THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE," "THE UNKNOWN RIVER," ETC.

NEW EDITION, REVISED,

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION.

"Fortunate is he who at an early age knows what *art* is."—GOETHE.

BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1874.

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1874

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TO

WILLIAM WYLD,

CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF AMSTERDAM.

My dear Wyld,—When the "Painter's Camp" and "Thoughts about Art" were issued together as one work, the whole was dedicated to you. Now that they are distinct books, I renew the dedication in each of them; not regretting that my affection for you personally and admiration for your art should be commemorated in two books instead of one.

Ever yours most faithfully,

P. G. HAMERTON.

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PREFACE.

In this edition the earlier Essays have been considerably abridged, but scarcely altered otherwise, and more recent ones have been added to bring the work more nearly down to the present date. Notes have been appended to several of the Essays with the same intention.

Since the public has favoured previous editions with some degree of approbation, an endeavour has been made to give the present one a relative permanence by reprinting nothing of merely temporary interest. Thus, it has been thought advisable to exclude criticisms of works of art which comparatively few readers were likely to have seen or to remember clearly enough to follow a criticism of them with pleasurable attention; and only those papers have been retained which might possibly be found readable ten years hence at a distance from London or Paris. "There is always," as Emerson says, "a selection

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in writers, and then a selection from the selection." This being so, it seems best to rid our books of what might become an impediment to such limited longevity as may be hoped for them.

1873.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE sentence of Goethe which I have quoted as a motto on the title-page of this edition shall be the text for a little sermon in this place, intended to serve as a general introduction to the more special questions treated in the course of the volume.

"Fortunate is he who at an early age knows what *art* is!"

It would be difficult in the whole course of ancient or modern literature, to find a sentence relating to art implying so much thought and experience as this. Goethe felt that true knowledge of a subject so difficult and complicated as art, is, if we reach it at all, unhappily only too likely to be reached at a time of life when it comes too late to be carried out effectively in practice, and that therefore the fortunate man, amongst men to whom art is of any consequence, is he to whom this knowledge comes early, when it may light up for him the obscurity in which he works. And if we had access to Goethe's mind, such as it was when he wrote that profound and immortal sentence, we should discover, most probably, that he used the word "art" in a sense

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much more comprehensive than the sense that is commonly attached to it, and that, in his much-embracing view, the good consequences of a knowledge of "what art is" would extend to many spheres of human activity that are usually believed to lie entirely outside of art; indeed, it is not impossible that Goethe, like other enlightened men of modern times, may have perceived that art cannot be understood, until so much of life and nature is understood that the mastery of this single subject implies at least an intelligent appreciation of almost every other subject.[7]

The reader will not expect me to attempt, in the narrow limits of an Introduction, an explanation of "what art is." The whole volume is merely tentative towards such an explanation; and indeed the whole of that rich and constantly increasing art literature which (to the displeasure of the merely practical) has in modern times investigated almost every field of artistic labour and enterprise, is nothing more than a very large and continuous attempt to understand "what art is."

Still it is possible, even in a space so limited as this, to lead the minds of some readers in such a direction that they may at least appreciate the full importance of the problem, and become heartily interested in it. And, to begin with, let me contend against the too prevalent idea that art is only a product of the richest and most civilized communities, and not a thing of general human concern, not a product of human nature outside of academical influences. The simple truth is that wherever man has fixed his residence, from the equator to the poles, he has always been either an artist or a promoter of art, certainly not always highly cultivated

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in these capacities, yet sufficiently for the satisfaction of the artistic wants which he felt as they developed themselves within him. The opinion that art is to be found nowhere but in Europe, and even in Europe hardly outside of the Latin races in modern times, or the Grecian and Roman races in antiquity, is one of those opinions which appear to us less and less reasonable and admissible as we gradually advance in knowledge. Our most accomplished colourists have the most serious admiration for the perfect colouring of the richly-endowed Chinese; our ablest draughtsmen acknowledge the magnificent power of abstraction that was displayed by the national artists of Japan, at a time when Europe and her culture were absolutely unheard of there. Nor is it only these highly gifted and ancient races who have produced art to which no cultivated European can refuse his admiration; for in the art of every country, even of the most savage tribes—with the exception of those rare instances when man is simply brutal—the artistic instinct finds its expression, often a strangely interesting and beautiful expression, in the adornment of the things that are regarded with love and pride, or with feelings of religious veneration, in the carving of temple-pillar or war-canoe, in the embroidery of the mantle or the tent.

And as we look far back in time, to ancient Egypt or Assyria, or to the oldest Indian civilization, a time so early in the history of humanity that its most primitive instincts may be supposed to have operated without the restraint of the critical habit that grows upon us afterwards, we perceive that these races had *art*—an art full of might and majesty, whose silent language is still

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intelligible to us, and conveys to us a clear conception of their mind and life. We are a long way past the young intolerance of criticism that can only read the art of some favoured epoch which may happen to be in fashion as a subject of present investigation. It has become plain to us that every art which is thoroughly genuine, every art which is the spontaneous expression of a people's taste and feeling, has in it some precious and incommunicable quality, which is a part of the great mind of humanity, setting itself forth in the most perfect shape. Nobody in these days would deserve the reputation of a critic who had not powers of sympathy and imagination sufficiently large in their activity to enable him at least to enjoy both the art of the time of Pericles, and the art that flourished under Saint Louis. But the perfect critic would have a sympathy almost divine in its universality. He would perceive that what are narrowly called the defects of any kind of art that is really a genuine product of human nature (and not a *pastiche*) are truly inseparable from its qualities, and if rightly considered will be found to be qualities themselves. Let me take an illustration from one of the arts of utility, from ship-building. It is now admitted by everybody who understands boats and ships that the "perfect ship" is an impossibility, because what we call qualities are destructive of each other, so that if one of them is highly developed it must be at the expense of another. And what is now the consequence, in ship-building, of the admission of this great truth? The consequence is that men no longer vainly endeavour to unite all the qualities in one vessel, but determine before they begin to construct, which quality is to be

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predominant, and then knowingly make partial sacrifices of the rest. Just so in our edifices on the land, it has been well observed by M. Charles Blanc that though every building must necessarily have height, length, and width, we do not strongly feel the effect of any one of these qualities until the others have been purposely sacrificed to it; so that even a small chapel will seem lofty if only it is long and narrow, and a cathedral will seem crushed and low, though it be thrice the height of the chapel in feet and inches, if it be wide and short proportionately.

Now if we keep this principle well in view whilst studying the art of different times and nations, and even of contending schools in one country, or of individual artists in one school, we shall clearly see that the variety of art is due to the predominance, at one time of one quality, at another time of another quality, and that consequently there can be no uniform rule of merit in artistic production except this, that every kind of art may be considered good which sets forth any one quality to the best advantage.

There is not space, in the limits of an Introduction, to attempt an exposition of the nature of these qualities, but I may affirm as much as this, that art is always *human*, and that every attempt which has been made hitherto (there have been several such attempts) to carry art outside of human prejudice and affection into the region of pure truth has always either ended in the death of fine art, or else caused a strong reaction towards the exaggerations of personal passion. If you divest art of its human element, you bring it to the condition of a scientific diagram or of a photograph,

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and we all feel that there is an essential difference between these and the productions of what we are accustomed to call fine art. There *is* a difference, an essential and ineffaceable difference. You will find, indeed, in one of the writings of Leonardo da Vinci a statement to the effect that the looking-glass is the master of painters, and that the way to test the excellence of a picture is to set by its side a mirror containing a reflection of the reality. Now, although we are well accustomed to hear artists say foolish things about their art, it may be doubted whether any artist ever gave expression to a doctrine so erroneous in so many various ways as this doctrine is; and the error of it is most especially remarkable for its simplicity, for the sort of simplicity which usually belongs to childishness and absolute inexperience. If it were possible to paint a picture exactly answering to Leonardo's ideal of perfection, that is to say a picture just like a reflection in a mirror, the work when done would not be a work of fine art, for the human element would be entirely eliminated. It would be a mere reflection, like a photograph, with the addition of colour, and even the colour of it would not be what artists understand by colour, but a reflection of the hues of nature, no more like artistic colour than the accidental jumbling together of different shapes in a photograph is like thoughtful artistic composition. Neither would there be a single line, no not so much as one fold of drapery, *entirely* satisfactory to the artistic sense within us. It is impossible, as Leslie discovered, when attempts were made in society to copy famous pictures by *tableaux vivants*, it is *impossible* to arrange the real drapery as great

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artists arrange drapery on their canvases. Natural drapery will not fall so, or stand so, and cannot be made to stand so. But I may go still further than this, and affirm, which I do boldly, that all those accents of line and of colour which constitute so much of the charm and quality of all painting worthy of the name of fine art are invariably deviations from the precise truth in one way or another, being, as Proudhon said, either laudatory or depreciatory, either augmentative or diminutive; indeed, the whole creative and executive power of a great artist depends upon the skill with which he intentionally or unconsciously deviates from the literal truth of nature. In Raphael the deviation was clearly intentional, for he plainly said that he did not paint what is, but that which ought to be; and we have evidence in comparing his studies with the pictures he painted from them how much he deviated from the truth, and how masterly and right his deviations were. In Leonardo's practical work the departures from accuracy may have been unconscious, as his doctrine of the mirror appears to show; but though not anything like so much of an artist as either Raphael or Titian, he was still far too much the artist to let the mirror be his master. Nobody ever saw in a looking-glass, and it may be safely affirmed that nobody will ever behold in any looking-glass not bewitched by necromancy, such an arrangement of form and line as we have in Leonardo's Last Supper.

Now there has existed for the space of nearly a generation in England a theory about art, which future ages will probably look back upon as one of the most curiously interesting of bygone popular delusions.

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Stated quite fairly, and not maliciously, the theory was briefly this: "Art has but one firm basis, the truth of nature; and sound criticism has but one method, to ascertain in the first place what the truth is, and then to praise artists or condemn them exactly in proportion to their conformity or non-conformity to the truth." No imaginable theory of fine art could have been more agreeable to the English mind. People who all their lives long had felt an uneasy self-consciousness that they really knew nothing about the matter, and could not see into it with the most patient looking, were delighted to be told that art, after all, was merely the representation of nature as it is, and that whoever would carefully observe what nature is, might become like that fortunate young man of Goethe's who knew "what art is." Before the discovery of this doctrine art had been *insaisissable;* people felt that it had a sort of existence, as a rainbow has, but it was constantly eluding critical rules and definitions and could not be grasped and fixed. After trying to lay hold of that rainbow for generations, what a comfort it was to have art made as positive and measurable as a park-wall, to be able to go straight up to it, and touch it, and take out one's pocket foot-rule, and settle its merits indisputably by a simple arithmetical operation! The new doctrine harmonized so nicely, too, with the conception of art which naturally exists in every primitive and ignorant understanding! For the truly ignorant person, the person in a state of rude uncultivated nature, such as the native Hottentot, the English Philistine, the French *bourgeois* and the like, has but one uniform conception of graphic art when he sees it, and that is the simple copyism of

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objects. If the picture pleases him, he does not praise it for fine arrangements of colour or light-and-shade, but for imitative fidelity: if he blames it, the blame does not attach to any artistic imprudence or stupidity, but to the neglect of imitative truth—a neglect of which the greatest masters have left us the most striking examples. The notion of an artist's work which exists amongst the ignorant, and which the new doctrine about the truth of nature fostered and encouraged to the uttermost, is that he is a sort of living photographic camera having for its business to copy faithfully whatever is set before it. And the new criticism congratulated itself on the establishment of an eternal criterion, and expected by means of a little scientific preparation, a little botany, a little geology, a little meteorology, and even perhaps a little animal anatomy, to fix and regulate for ever the rank of a class of workers, whose essential qualities can no more be ascertained by positive science than the course of a balloon can be ascertained by a reference to *Bradshaw.*

A picture might be painted, a statue might be carved, which should be patiently faithful to nature yet destitute of the qualities of art, and wholly unworthy to occupy a place in any well-chosen collection. So long as the painter or sculptor is bound down to the literal truth, his artistic faculties are not allowed to operate. Art only begins with the liberty of the artist, as flight only begins with the liberty of the bird.

Let me endeavour to show how the artistic faculties will operate in a particular case. Let us suppose that a painter who has the artistic gifts in their full strength and energy, and is not trammelled by any theory

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of criticism or exigence of customers, takes a canvas with the simple intention of doing with it what seems to him best. He has a certain conception in his own mind, and his purpose in painting is twofold: he wants to see his idea realized on canvas, and he wishes to communicate it to others. The idea, to begin with, has been received from or suggested by something that the artist has seen in the world of nature. This is inevitable, for art is always based upon nature in this way. But now let me attempt to show how incompatible are the realization of the artistic idea and the simple copyism of the material facts by which the idea was suggested. The impression the artist has received depends on the condition of his mind, a condition resulting from the most complex causes, from his own physical and mental organization, from his past experience of all kinds, and from everything which at the time he received the impression could even temporarily affect his mental state. Now it is a necessity of all such peculiar mental states that they accept some parts of the reality and reject other parts, that they proceed by selection and emphasis, that they delight in certain objects or qualities, and ignore other objects and qualities as completely as if they did not exist, and that they present what has affected them in a manner as far as possible removed from judicial impartiality. Suppose, then, that an artist in this partial and passionate state of mind (without which he cannot be an artist) endeavours to place on record the clear perceptions and intense emotions that he feels, how is it possible that in the vulgar sense of the words he should give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? What he will practically do is this. He will

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give invention, and partial truth, and emotion mixed with truth. His constant endeavour will be to present an accurate image *not* of the actual incident or scene, but of the condition of his own mind as it happened to be affected by the incident or scene. And in order to effect this he will exaggerate some things and diminish others, and omit many other things altogether; whilst throughout what he *does* consider necessary to his work, the same exaggeration, diminution, and rejection will operate incessantly even in the most apparently trifling details, so that no single object will be presented exactly as it is, but they will all be shaped anew by the artist's governing will, to form no longer a part of the world of nature, but to be moulded and fitted to their places in the other world of art. It is the exercise of this governing, ordering will (*ordering*, I say advisedly, for its purpose is a new and beautiful *order*) that is the great business of the artist, and artists take rank in proportion as this governing power is strong in them; it is present in all true artists, for without it there is no fine art, but it is strong only in great ones, and strongest in the greatest.

We are told sometimes, in little treatises on the practice of oil and water-colour painting, that colour is peculiarly difficult because it depends so much upon relation; so that if you give a dab with a brush charged with a mixed tint on one part of a picture, and then give another dab with the same brush, charged with the same tint on another part of the picture, the two dabs will appear entirely different in hue. There can be no doubt about the truth of this, but the curious thing is that so few of those who insist upon it seem to be aware that

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the same law of relativity governs *everything* in the world of art, not colour only, but everything whatever that can have any influence upon the spectator. To exercise the great art-faculty is to extract power from these relations; and the copyism of objects, in isolated studies, does not exercise the high art-faculty at all. Goethe perceived this long since. He perceived that the effect of everything depends upon its surroundings, and that to detach and isolate is to destroy. He found out that if you go and draw an oak-tree without the background that it had in nature, you can never make it look like the same oak, do what you will. Every observant person must have noticed how different a man we have known at his own home looks when we meet him elsewhere, from the absence of those surroundings which were a part of him in our conception.

Enough has been said to put the reader in possession of the leading idea which governs my thinking about the fine arts, an idea which is practically set forth in all great art whatever, but which has sometimes been lost sight of by modern craftsmen and modern writers upon art. I maintain that in every work which pretends to be a work of art, the art itself, and not what is vulgarly supposed to be the subject, is the chief thing, and that the art consists in invention, selection, omission, accent, passion, partiality, exaggeration, diminution, glorification and condemnation, all which are in open defiance of the rigidity of literalism. And if anyone, after this declaration of independence, should inquire how much natural truth may, after all, be considered necessary to fine painting, I can only answer, just as much as the artist chooses, and the public of his time will exact from

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him on the one hand, or tolerate on the other. The one thing to be attended to is to avoid discussions about truth. If the public happens to be knowing and scientific, it is as well to give it truth enough to prevent it from thinking about scientific deficiencies when it ought to be impressed by art; but if, on the other hand, the public is very ignorant, the wise artist will refrain as much as possible from troubling it with facts that are strange to it, that it cannot possibly understand, and which will only vex its mind, and make it incapable of quiet sympathy and enjoyment. The embarrassment of the modern artist is that his public is both scientific and ignorant at the same time, so that he may offend by knowing too little, and offend by knowing too much.

What the artist really needs, and what is most difficult for him in the circumstances of modern life, is to preserve the artistic state of mind in all its purity and vigour, and not to allow himself to be drawn away into other states of mind incompatible with that which alone can render great production possible to him. He is not so much in danger from the commercial or political, as from the literary and scientific states. In literature he may find strength or weakness—strength in the great old poets who could *see* and live in the mighty imaginative temper, but weakness in the incessant arguments and controversies of the hour. In science he may find some help to memory of things, and sometimes (but this merely in the grandest *results* of science, not in its slow and delicate processes) a stimulus to his sense of wonder and a relief from his special work. But the only literary spirit which is compatible with great art is the spirit of the noblest inventive literature,

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not the temperance of philosophy nor the pride of erudition, and the only science that is safe for an artist is that which is free from any eagerness to demonstrate. The artist ought to believe in art and rely upon art, and live in it, for in the palace of the soul are many mansions, and his is not the least capacious nor the least permanent, whilst we are all aware that it is certainly not the least beautiful.

1873.

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THOUGHTS ABOUT ART.

I.

THAT CERTAIN ARTISTS SHOULD WRITE ON ART.

THE public use of literature may be comprehensively defined in a single word. All literature is a record. The important service it renders to mankind is *the perpetual registering of the experience of the race.* Without literature it is inconceivable that any race of men could reach a degree of culture comparable to ours, because, without a literature to record it, the experience of dead generations could never be fully available for the living one. Oral and practical tradition no doubt have their use, as we see to this day in many trades and professions; but this tradition is in our time nearly always aided by, or based upon, written records. And nothing is more characteristic of our age than its constantly increasing tendency to commit everything to writing. The most ordinary professions and trades have their literatures,—trades which not long since were merely traditional. The experience of the race is now registered by literature in all its departments. Our novelists paint the manners of their time.

How precious such verbal paintings will be in a thousand years! Thackeray and Balzac will make it possible for our descendants to live over again in the England and France of to-day. Seen in this light, the novelist has a higher office than

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merely to amuse his contemporaries; he hands them down all living and talking together to the remotest ages. When the new Houses of Parliament and the new Louvre shall be as antique to others as the Colosseum is to us, *they* shall know what manner of men and women first walked under the freshly carved arcades of the new palace on the banks of the Seine, and saw the tall towers grow year after year like young trees at Westminster.

This view of all literature as a register of human experience may be demurred to with regard to some of its departments. It may be objected, for example, that our contemporary poetry is not a record of our experience. But it is a record of our *feelings*, and these are a part, and a very important part, of the experience of all cultivated persons. A poem which has been greatly popular in its own time, even though it may bear no very obvious relation to it, must nevertheless have been in close unison with much contemporary sentiment.

I mentioned fiction and poetry first because they seemed the weakest point of my argument; but when I come to periodical literature no one will for a moment dispute that it is strictly a register of all the thoughts and acts of humanity, day by day, week by week, and month by month. In the files of the newspapers our descendants will possess a full and detailed record, not only of our acts, but of our most transient opinions and hopes. A number of the *Times* has not done its work when you or I have read it. Other eyes will read it after a thousand years with all the advantages of that immense experience behind them! They will see us timidly delaying, or earnestly advocating, changes whose vast results shall to them be matter of history.

Such history as that of Macaulay and Motley is a register of the retrospective kind. It is like the early chapters of an autobiography. In an autobiography we have an accurate type of mankind's ways of placing itself on record. Such records or memories of their life as childhood and youth preserve to maturity are afterwards sifted, judged, arranged, and re-written by the grown man in the full light of his experience. Yet the past is continually slipping away from us, and, though we keep its results, we forget its circumstances. So all that we call history is no better than the early or introductory chapter of

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Humanity's autobiography.[1] Its best history is its *diary;* that is, its daily newspapers. For histories, though they may preserve facts, which is not always to be said of them, inevitably lose impressions, whereas journalists write down the most transient impressions of the intelligent class in their time. We may therefore look upon the newspaper not merely as a register of facts, but a record of thoughts.

The technical literature which has taken such a vast development of late is, however, the strongest basis of the argument I wish to enforce. The immense quantity of books published within the last twenty years for the especial use of particular trades and professions is one of the best results of the increase of population, and the consequent increase of professional readers. It is, perhaps, in law and medicine that this development is most remarkable; but it extends to all trades, for almost every mechanic can read, and cheap technical literature is brought within the reach of all purses. Mr. Weale, of Holborn, has published a very valuable series of cheap technical works at a shilling a volume. M. Roret, of Paris, has issued an immense encyclopædia, including every conceivable trade from common blacksmith's work up to religious architecture.

In reviewing all these technical works, the first fact that strikes one with regard to their authors is, that they are none of them what we call literary men. They are not men who live by literature as a profession; they live by other trades or professions, and resort to literature only as a means of communicating to others their professional observations.

It therefore appears that literature is not an exclusive profession, but a common magazine to which intelligent men of all classes, and of every occupation, contribute the results of their particular experience. This is the point which I desire the reader to concede. If he maintains, as some literary men do, that literature is a profession which no one can enter without an exclusively literary training, if he believes that no one ought to write who does anything else, it will be necessary for me to argue my point more elaborately.

There is no proof that literature is an exclusive profession; if it is one, it presents the singular peculiarity that its

[1] And it has exactly the same defects which attach to the earlier chapters of all autobiographies, for it does not describe the reality of youth, but Maturity's conception of what youth must have been.

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professors are often surpassed by amateurs. It is not at all on the same footing with painting in this respect. The art of pictorial expression is quite technical, and peculiar to a certain limited class of students; the art of verbal expression is common to all men who can talk, and the art of literary expression to all who can write a letter.

It is not too much to say that, of the great writers of the world, at least one-half have been amateurs. Chaucer and Milton were; and even in the case of Shakespeare, though his plays made money, his authorship was secondary to his business of theatrical manager. Scott and Talfourd were both lawyers, not bred especially to literature; Kingsley is a clergyman, Ricardo was a banker, so was Grote; and John Stuart Mill was a hard-working servant of the East India Company. Sidney Dobell was a wine-merchant, and followed that business assiduously fifteen years. Samuel Warren is an industrious lawyer, Mr. Trollope a clerk in the Civil Service, and the author of "Tom Brown's School-days" a barrister, whom I have heard solicitors speak highly of in his professional capacity. These are names which occur to me whilst writing rapidly. If I took time to reflect, I should find a host of other instances of amateurs who have succeeded in literature; but this is needless. It is enough to suggest a truth so obvious. It can require no accumulation of evidence to show, what all men's experience proves, that the faculty of expressing oneself well in written language is by no means peculiar to those who earn their living by it. The contributors to our best reviews are not invariably writers by profession, and their editors are only too happy to receive good articles written by intelligent men in the intervals of quite different avocations. The last phrase reminds me of a book called "Essays written in the Intervals of Business," which has passed through many editions, —a fact which of itself proves that a man of business may successfully occupy himself with literature.

No merely literary man can, as such, be expected to write any one of those very useful and even necessary books which treat of subjects that require great special experience. Literary men never do write such books unless prepared for them, as Lewes was for his "Essays on Physiology," by a distinct professional education, quite apart from purely literary culture. If by accident a man who has been intended by his parents for

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a lawyer, and educated for the law, and who has practised for some years as a lawyer, afterwards abandons the law for general literature, he may compose a legal treatise; but a magazine writer by profession, who had never received any legal education, could not.

There is no subject in the world of which the mere writer-of-all-work is less competent to treat than art. It is eminently a subject requiring practical experience and especial study. It cannot be grasped in its large relations by minds habitually occupied with other matters, and whose only claim to treat of it is their faculty of verbal expression. It demands great personal devotion, and untiring enthusiasm. It requires also much technical knowledge. The devotion and the enthusiasm are occasionally found in men who are not practically artists, the technical experience never.

This is the reason why our art criticism is for the most part so unprofitable. Even the best of it generally deals with works of art in their intellectual aspect only, with a slight admixture of technical jargon, but no intelligent reference to the facts of nature.

I do not, however, argue that artists should write criticism. It may be undesirable that painters should spend any of their time or energy in what would in their case be too likely to degenerate into personal recrimination. It is true that literary men attack each other's works from behind the shelter of the anonymous, and a few of the best art criticisms are contributed to the periodicals by artists. But this is not a desirable direction for the talents of an artist who writes. His especial office with the pen is to contribute to the general enlightenment on the subject of art in its relation to nature, in ways which need not involve attacks on his living rivals.

I was present on one occasion when a distinguished painter was asked by a young author how it happened that artists so rarely wrote upon their own art. "Because," said the painter, "they are so generally deficient in the first rudiments of a literary education." I believe that answer, however unfavourable to artists, to have been much nearer to the truth than the common theory that there is something essentially incompatible between the literary and artistic intellects. Certainly Ary Scheffer recognized no such incompatibility when he said, that "pour être artiste, il faut avoir en soi un sentiment élevé, ou une convic-

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tion puissante, digne d'être exprimé par une langue qui peut être indifféremment la prose, la poésie, la musique, la sculpture, ou la peinture."

Persons to whom the mere act of writing is the most arduous of all exertion are not likely to spend more time upon it than they are absolutely compelled so to spend. This simple consideration is sufficient to account for the fact that artists, in general, are not communicative by means of the pen. If they were all educated in literature before they began to paint, as clergymen and lawyers are before they begin to preach and to practise, artist writers would, probably, bear as great a proportion to the numbers employed in their art as legal and clerical authors to the other members of their professions. And if painters were so educated, perhaps they would not paint worse for it. It does not follow that Turner would have painted less skilfully if he had had such a degree of education as every schoolboy of twelve years old ought to possess. If he had been able to write good English, and even spell such French words as he required as titles to his drawings, he might, nevertheless, in spite of these attainments, have reached his present rank as a landscape painter.

In the case of artists who can write and do not, there may be two reasons for their silence. The first is, that when a successful painter lays down the brush to take up a pen, he is sacrificing, for each hour that he writes, a certain calculable sum of money; another reason is a strong conviction, common to most artists, that if they were to say anything about their art it would be of no use, because the public could not understand it.

This feeling has hitherto been well founded, but there can be no doubt that a certain portion of the public is advancing towards such a knowledge of art as may enable it to receive the teaching even of artists themselves. The consequence of this, and its inevitable result in creating a demand for a kind of literature relating to the fine arts, will be, that unless artists are themselves prepared to supply such a literature, they will be supplanted by dilettants, who thus acquire an influence over public opinion on matters connected with art to which they have no natural right. On the other hand, the public itself must be retarded in its art culture by the dissemination of crude and imperfect theories. And since it has not time to investigate such matters for itself, and must always take them

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on trust from some one in temporary authority, society will set up its favourite writers as rulers, against whose verdict there will be no appeal. It appears therefore desirable that a few artists in each generation should themselves contribute to the literature of art, in order to maintain the influence which their knowledge entitles them to. For as the priesthood in every religion takes into its own hands the production of a theological literature based on its especial tenets, so, it appears, ought painters to lead the literature of their own art, though I would not discourage intelligent amateurs from freely contributing to it.—1861

NOTE.

Since this little essay was written in 1861, I have had farther experience, especially in the foundation of an artistic periodical, the *Portfolio*, which may throw some additional light upon this subject. I still consider the persistent silence of accomplished artists to be an evil for general art-culture, but I have little hope of seeing this evil remedied by any serious literary activity on their part. A most distinguished painter, who is now also deservedly celebrated as a poet, told me some years before he became known in literature, that although he delighted in literary composition, the subject of art was the very last subject he would ever feel induced to write about. Another English artist, a man of general culture, told me that although he wrote very frequently for his own pleasure, his writings always, by some irresistible inward necessity, took a purely lyrical form, and when I asked for articles he sent me sonnets. An eminent living sculptor wrote a successful poem, but felt no inclination to express himself in reflective prose. The difficulty appears to be this. Perfect artistic execution is compatible with the most narrow and erroneous theories, and the perfection of it is often positively enhanced and favoured by such narrowness, which concentrates practical effort; whereas to write well we need the breadth and tolerance of philosophy, with its capacity for sympathising with the most various conditions of feeling. For example (I am alluding here to living men, in France and England, well known to me personally), one artist will despise

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all Gothic architecture together as a monstrosity, the product of mental disease, whilst another will come back from Rome and tell you in perfect good faith that Michael Angelo was nothing but a vulgar stupid brute. If it were possible for me to publish the opinions which artists have expressed in my hearing, in the confidence of private conversation, the collection would fill most readers with the utmost astonishment. Let me mention two or three such opinions as examples of what we have to be prepared for. Two painters visited the great French Exhibition of 1867, and afterwards affirmed that there was nothing in that collection worth looking at. An eminent English painter expressed a hearty contempt for *all* water-colours, and wondered why I ever went to see any; another despised all engravers and engravings; a third wondered how I could take any interest in etching. Then, in the way of particular criticism, one painter affirms that Mulready never could draw at all, and that at forty years old he would have been refused admission, as a pupil, at the school of fine art in Paris; another says that Hunt is absolutely ignorant of the first principles of colouring; a third that Gérôme never produced anything deserving serious attention; whereas some utterly unknown man is the greatest artist since Raphael. Now all these prejudices do no harm to the artists who are possessed by them, but they would be a most serious impediment to a writer. It is desirable for practical persons that they should have whatever prejudices may foster their practical energy, but it is not desirable for a man who attempts to lead others in their thinking that his head should be a chaos of blundering injustice, and that he should butt with it, like a goat, against everything that is beyond his comprehension. The truth is that practical art is a faith, whilst the theory of art is a philosophy; and the difficulty of getting good writing about art from the hands of artists lies in the intensity of their beliefs, which makes them love and hate so ardently that it is impossible for them to enter into the minds and work of others. Of all artists who have written upon their art, Leslie was the least likely to be carried away by any prejudice that could take the form of uncharitableness, and yet Leslie was strikingly unfair in his appreciation of contemporary art. The British school, according to Leslie, had the wine, and the continental schools the water of art, at least until after the Peace, and then the British wine became mixed with continental water. He says that it will be time enough to call the work of continental painters the cultivation of high art "when they

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produce pictures that will bear even a distant comparison with the works of the great old masters:" and then he cites Fuseli and others, even including Haydon, in some of his works, as men whose productions "will hang with credit amongst those of the greatest painters who ever lived." His low estimate of contemporary work is evidenced by his approval of Constable's sinister prediction, "the art will go out in thirty years."

And still, notwithstanding these wrong estimates, occasioned by that passionate feeling about art without which it is impossible to be an artist, it seems most desirable that artists should leave some record of their convictions. The public would easily learn to make the necessary allowances for the faith of the practical painter, and if these allowances were once made the painter could throw a stronger and clearer light upon the kind of art he loved, than the dispassionate, unpractical critic. "Love is not a hood, but an eye-water," as Emerson says. Love makes things visible to us, hatred blinds us. The artist always loves and hates with the most passionate intensity. He is clear-sighted in his love, and in his hatred blind. In everything that he says in favour of other art than his own there is sure to be much truth that we should be the better for apprehending, but his condemnations are merely a horror of darkness, of his own darkness and ignorance.

The objection to artists, as writers on art, is their injustice; the objection to literary men who write on art is their ignorance of technical conditions and difficulties, and their consequent incapacity for making the necessary allowances. The plain truth is that to write on art we require two distinct educations, one in literature and philosophy, the other in practical art-work. It is difficult to have the two in sufficient strength and completeness; hence the excessive rarity of competent writers upon artistic subjects. Successful painters find that the cultivation of their own corner in the great garden of the arts occupies the whole of their time and energy; successful writers need several hours a day for the study of literature, and several other hours for the production of their own literature, so that they have rarely the time for much practical work in the fine arts. And yet it is practical work, and this alone, which opens our eyes to nature. It is with pencil and brush, and not with book and pen, that we clear our way through the forest of thorns that encircles the paradise of art.—1873.

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II.

PAINTING FROM NATURE.

THE practice of painting from nature, in the modern sense, is of very recent adoption. It is probable that before our own time no landscape painter ever began and finished an oil *picture* out of doors and from nature itself.[1] Figure painters painted from nature, and landscape painters made studies from nature, with more or less accuracy and resolution; but no one seriously thought of finishing anything but mere sketches or studies out of doors. The art of landscape painting was essentially practised in the studio; its materials were gathered in the fields, like the raw material of human food, but cooked in the artistic kitchen before being served up for the appreciation of the connoisseur. At the present day, however, many painters—especially our younger ones—are devoting immense labour to the finishing of pictures out of doors; a costly and inconvenient proceeding, and one which ought to reward its votaries very richly for all the trouble and fatigue it inevitably entails.

I propose in the present chapter to analyse the art of painting from nature, to point out the various ways in which it may be pursued, to examine one by one all the principal difficulties against which painters who work directly from nature

[1] It may still be doubted whether any painting of landscape possessing the unity, and the qualities of artistic conception and feeling, which are essential to a true *picture*, as distinguished from a study, has ever been wrought directly from nature. Work from nature, in landscape, always seems to run inevitably into studies not into pictures.—1873.

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have continually to contend, and lastly to suggest certain plans and contrivances by which a few of the most irritating of them may be combated and overcome.

It is not to be supposed that, in taking their canvases out of doors, all painters propose to themselves the same object. A certain limitation is always, whether consciously or unconsciously, imposed on himself by every artist in his imitation of nature. If no such limitation were resolved upon by the artist, no picture would ever be finished, and no artist would ever have done with any one of his works. If, on the other hand, no such limitation were accepted by the public, no human labour could ever satisfy it. So far from being unpopular, a strict limitation of the imitative art is quite joyfully understood and admitted by everybody; sketches being generally quite as much liked in their way as finished pictures; and pictures which are little more than sketches in oil, as, for instance, those of Decamps, being often eagerly purchased by collectors. Every artist, therefore, has his point of limitation, his finishing point, and he has also his point of imitation, beyond which he does not think fit to follow nature. Even the severest pre-Raphaelite must make up his mind to stop *somewhere* in his copyism of natural objects,—if he could not submit to this, he would have to abandon the art altogether, for the pursuit of it with unbridled instincts of imitation would be altogether intolerable, and enough to drive any man mad. These two limitations of finish and of imitation are, however, very different things. A painter may finish minutely without imitating minutely; but he cannot imitate minutely without finishing minutely. In working from nature, *all* the limitations that the painter has accepted hem him in and determine the character of his work. Those limitations are of all kinds,—they may be purely conventional, as, for instance, the classicism of Sir George Beaumont; they may be fixed by the practice of some former master whom the artist looks up to as an authority that it would be presumptuous to surpass; they may be settled for the painter by the narrowness of his own sympathies and the dulness of his own sight, and so be the most impassable of all prison boundaries,—those of a man's own nature. Lastly, they may be wise and necessary limitations, imposed upon himself consciously, severely, and sorrowfully, by a great man who thoroughly loves Nature, and longs to follow her wherever she would lead him, but who

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restrains himself at a certain definite point, knowing that human weakness can go no farther without failure.

In order to place more vividly before the reader the manner in which these limitations operate, I will show how several different classes of painters work from nature, and afterwards explain what seems to be the most reasonable and practical way of working from nature.

THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL.

These painters do, indeed, work from nature, but they adapt all they find to preconceived ideas in their own minds, formed from famous pictures in the galleries. They are painting from nature in quite a peculiar sense. Claude and Poussin stand between them and every thing they see. When they see any thing in nature that is like Claude, they think it good for art, and introduce it; first carefully altering it in a Claudesque manner. When they find things not to be found in Claude or Poussin, a circumstance that must very frequently occur to them, they reject them without hesitation, as unfitted for artistic purposes. Two foreign artists of this kind when travelling in the Highlands, on seeing a magnificent effect at Loch Awe, rather contemptuously observed that "the effect was *false*," though in nature itself, their standard of truth being not nature, but Claude.[1] All classical students approach Nature in this spirit. They do not go to her to be taught, but to impose their own rules on all they take; consequently they learn nothing. Once benumb the human soul with the fatal mesmerism of too much reverence for some dead man's name, and you can render it for ever blind to the plainest facts in the world it lives in. All classical art-students have accepted the principle that the perfection of landscape art was attained two hundred years ago by the classical landscape-painters, and during all their lives will see nothing except through the Poussin spectacles. For them nature only exists as a mine

[1] Suppose these painters had seen a true *picture* of the effect which they called false in nature, would they not have called it false also in art?

Yes; and there is another thing to be said.

Other people, who would not have dared to call the effect false in nature, would have called it false in art, though truly painted; and they do so constantly.

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of possible Claudes and Poussins, and where they do not see Claude or Poussin, they see *nothing*.[1]

THE IMAGINATIVE MODERN SCHOOL.

They are too original and have too much natural ability to allow of their patiently Poussinizing nature; but they are, at the same time, too independent and self-reliant to imitate her. They paint from imagination in the presence of nature, using nature merely for the first suggestion of the idea, and in the subsequent progress of the work as an authority on scientific facts of form, colour, &c.

In works produced on this principle there is no pretence to imitation, although the painter may begin and finish his picture out of doors, and although, when finished, the work may *seem* imitative.

As painters of the classical school are prevented from imitating by their reverence for dead artists, so these cannot imitate because their imagination is too strong, and they must obey it. They love nature quite sincerely and exclusively, caring for other artists only so far as they lead them to nature. Nevertheless, they cannot imitate nature, because, in them, imagination overrules the imitative tendency. Artists of this order, when the imagination is not only powerful but of truly inventive quality (an imagination may be powerful that is not in the artistic sense inventive), if their imagination is really of the inventive order, such artists would do quite wrong to imitate, for loyalty to the laws of its constitution is the first duty of genius. These artists use natural phenomena as a novelist uses the people he meets with; they study them, and employ them as they think fit. But since, after all, they really *do* study them, and not scorn them like the classical landscape-

[1] Our complete deliverance from the "classical" landscape-painters has ultimately led us to a more complete enjoyment of those classical landscape-painters themselves. The reputation of Claude has lost nothing by our emancipation from the authority which formerly belonged to him. I enjoy Claude very heartily now, just as I do Virgil; I hated both when their names were used in contempt of that nobler nature which neither Claude nor Virgil understood. It seems to me now that the qualities of these two charming poets are, within their own limits, most precious and most desirable.—1873.

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painters, they have their reward, and learn much, though they copy little. The most illustrious example of this order of artists is Turner. In the early part of his career, being subjected to the prevailing theories, he wore the Claude and Poussin spectacles for a while, but soon threw them aside for ever. After that he *looked* at nature earnestly, learned an immense number of facts, gathered a huge encyclopædia of observations, but never once imitated without altering. He used external nature as Scott used mankind. Both were authors of fiction, yet both eminently *true* in their work. One cannot quarrel with painters and writers of this order because they give the full rein to their imagination; for the imaginative faculty was just as much given to be *used* as the imitative faculty. Nor does *such* altering as theirs imply the slightest want of reverence for nature. They revere nature none the less that they also respect the laws of their own nature.

It is evident that working out of doors on this principle cannot be so painfully laborious a process as strict imitation would be. It is, in fact, little more than swift sketching of memoranda, even when colour is used. And if painters of this order ever finish from nature, it is merely to have the scientific facts right, not for accuracy of form; so that they do not copy Nature, they merely *refer* to her as an author refers to the books in his library on matters of fact about which he is anxious to avoid error; but this is a very different thing to copying the books out, word for word, comma for comma.

THE ARTIFICIAL OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

They do not yet imitate in the accurate sense, but there is something bearing a distant resemblance to imitation visible in the outlines of their principal masses, yet even these are wilfully arranged. They use nature for reference; and there is a general appearance of likeness in their work, more satisfactory to common judges than the wholly imaginative arrangement of Turner.

They avoid detail, however, wherever mere skilful manipulation of colour may be made to stand for it. How far such manipulation may be made to go is very remarkable. It may be made to represent any thing that has no very definite form,

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and consequently does duty for a great deal of hard drawing. These painters do not really paint detail, but their skilful manipulation conveys the impression of detail.

I may make myself better understood by naming Mr. Harding as a well-known representative of this order of artists. The amount of manual skill and dexterity lavished by Mr. Harding on a system of interpretation, whose uniform aim and object was to avoid anything like downright study of detail, was quite marvellous. He was not in any sense an imitator, but a skilled interpreter of nature. He and nature did not speak the same language, had not the same formulæ. He was not a student trying hard to learn nature's language, but a great professor, foreign to nature, writing a translation of nature into his own tongue. The translation is exceedingly clever and brilliant, but it bears just as much resemblance to the original as Mr. Pope's translation of the "Iliad" does to the old Greek. Some people like Pope better than Homer, and some no doubt secretly prefer Mr. Harding to nature; but it does not at all follow that if you like the original you will relish the translation, nor the converse.

The influence which Mr. Harding has so long exercised over the immense number of amateurs who put their trust in him has been, on the whole, more salutary than might have been expected, considering that the first condition of popularity amongst amateurs is, that you are not to teach true art, but a pretty and cheap substitute for art,—cheap, I mean, in cost of labour. No drawing-master could earn his living by teaching art seriously, and the chief anxiety of every drawing-master is to invent the prettiest and easiest substitute for real art that he can. Now, Mr. Harding's substitute was extremely pretty and successful, and, what is much more to his credit, it really contained as much truth as the amateurs it was intended for were ever likely to tolerate. *Up to a certain point*, Mr. Harding led his scholars to nature; but the worst of all such systems as his is, that, once their fixed point reached, they arrest the education of the eye.

Mr. Harding is not the only artist of this class. They are exceedingly numerous, and each has a system of his own, in many cases quite as original, if not so cleverly contrived, as Mr. Harding's. Their uniform object, so far as they are themselves concerned, is to escape the painful elaboration of detail

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which the principles of imitation demand. Their other object, as to their pupils, is to supply an easy and cheap substitute for genuine work. Nevertheless, they study nature laboriously *within the limits imposed by their own systems.* I believe that in very many cases such systems are to be attributed entirely to the fact of the painter's giving lessons to amateurs, and that, if it were not necessary to flatter pupils with easy methods, such painters would often frankly abandon their systems altogether, and devote themselves in good earnest to the study of nature, accepting only the necessary and inevitable limitations, not these unnecessary artificial ones.

SHALLOW PSEUDO-IMITATORS.

We begin now to enter upon the province of imitation, but are as yet only on its frontiers.

These painters do indeed imitate, but only just so far as a common and very careless spectator is likely to see into the subject when he idly gazes at it without observing it. They are of a very popular order, for they accurately reproduce, not the scene itself, nor anything really resembling it, but every indolent spectator's impression of it. Their pictures demand little intelligence in the spectator, as they cost little to the artist. They are, therefore, intelligible, which is the first of all the conditions of saleableness, and such works are produced for the market in immense numbers.

In these works nature is happily arranged on received principles of composition, and such truths only are stated as are conducive to prettiness and perfectly easy to understand.

CLEVER AND LABORIOUS PSEUDO-IMITATORS.

They are not imitators in the pre-Raphaelite sense; but their work from nature goes very far, and is exceedingly laborious in detail. The difference between their imitation and pre-Raphaelite imitation is very easy to feel and very difficult to explain. It consists in this, that their fidelity is limited by habits of continual alteration and absolute want of intellectual and moral sympathy with the objects they illustrate, so that

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they never seize the significant marks. They admire nature, and have much energy and industry, so they work hard, and produce landscapes very full of detail; but they do not really sympathise with the expression of inanimate objects, so as to render it with power. Nor is any one of their details perfectly accurate; they do not love nature well enough for that.[1] They fill their canvas with detail to make it rich, and the detail is really very cleverly painted, and all copied from nature from beginning to end out of doors, only not one atom of it is thoroughly genuine and true. On the other hand, it is seldom imaginative because the gift of invention is so rare. I could name a score of successful landscape painters who belong to this class, clever, prosperous, and most industrious workmen in a high branch of manufacture, but neither true poets nor accurate observers. Their habits of work have nothing in common with Harding's masterly tricks of interpretation; they are scarcely intellectual enough to conceive and apply such principles. They are looked upon by the public as tolerably faithful imitators, the real fact being that they are only pseudo-imitators. As on the one hand their works have none of the majesty of imagination, so on the other they lack the preciousness of genuine imitation.

Painters of this order are often very rapid and skilful in working from nature, because the constant habit of manufacture leads to a certain dexterousness quite impossible for close observers and copyists of nature, and seldom compatible with great depth of feeling.

THE TRUE IMITATIVE SCHOOL.

We have come to true imitation at last. These painters work from nature in quite a different sense to any of the preceding ones. They really endeavour to render as much of nature as is to be rendered by colour, but will not sacrifice greater truths to less, and stop firmly at that difficult point where the imitation of details, pushed to its uttermost lawful

[1] Although this is perfectly true, it is rather unjust so far as it seems to imply that the want of accuracy is wrong. All works of art in which the artistic element has controlled and moulded the material, are quite sure to be inaccurate in their details. This law is universal. Studies may be accurate; noble pictures are *never* accurate.—1873.

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power, is to be sternly arrested before it endangers the truth of the whole work. Pass this point never so little, and your work is inevitably ruined, for the over-fidelity with which some favourite bit of detail is sure to be imitated will destroy the harmony of the whole. If, on the other hand, you fall short of this point, your art of painting from nature is not yet quite perfectly and preciously imitative. This high order of imitative painting requires great knowledge of the resources of art, and infinite patience and industry. I shall have more to say of it shortly.[1]

ASPIRANTS AFTER PERFECT ACCURACY.

Painters in whom the desire for accuracy has reached a morbid excess, and in whose works the passion for truth of imitation is so unrestrained by artistic judgment as to be destructive to pictorial harmony.

This leads to the production of studies, of which parts are well painted, but entirely out of harmony with other parts. With the passion for accuracy in excess, all production of true pictorial art is quite impossible, for no natural materials can be woven together into the shape of a complete picture without some sacrifice of accuracy.

No one can continue *long* in this state of mind, which is merely a disease of the imitative faculties, and always leads either to the entire abandonment of the art, or the conscious and resolute acceptance of the limitations necessary to the health of the artistic intellect.

A common delusion of young painters is to suppose that this over-accuracy is in itself an attractive quality, because it costs them immense patience and labour. They naturally value it too much in proportion to what it costs *them*, and without sufficient reference to the effect it is able to produce on others. But this, the costliest of qualities in a picture, is the very one which produces the least effect upon the world.

[1] Perfectly imitative painting of landscape has never, to my knowledge, been done out of the English School. Minute painting has been done elsewhere (trees with small, distinct leaves, &c.). Whilst still clearly recognizing the peculiar quality and interest of strictly accurate imitation in landscape-painting, I believe now that from the constitution of human nature such painting can never affect it. Only emotional art moves mankind, and emotion is incompatible with accuracy.—1873.

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It will not help a picture to find a place in the exhibition, because the judges cannot have the real scene before their eyes for comparison, and always look for qualities of composition which rigid accuracy requires us to sacrifice. It will not command a purchaser, because, if the purchaser knows the scene,[1] an accurate transcript of it will inevitably seem to him inadequate and spiritless, whereas, if he does *not* know it, the accuracy will, of course, be quite thrown away upon him. It will not catch the critics, because critics consider accuracy incompatible with imagination, and therefore do not consider accurate painters as artists at all in the higher sense.

The first secret of the painter from nature is to select his subject wisely.

None but foreground subjects can be really painted from nature in a climate so changeable as ours; but there is a kind of intermediate art, a combination of the two arts of painting from nature and painting from memoranda, which is competent to deal with mountains.

To illustrate this, let us take a single instance of no extraordinary difficulty. The painter wants a faithful picture of Ben Cruachan. So he plants his easel as near to the mountain as he can get it, if he wishes to see it at all, which of course must be a few miles off. He sits down conscientiously to paint a portrait of Ben Cruachan from nature.

The first day is the 10th of July. A good, plain daylight effect is on the hill—not a difficult evanescent effect, but such plain daylight as an unimaginative copyist likes best.

The picture cannot possibly be finished before the 10th of August.

On the 10th of July, the water is a deep blue, the mountain a pale but rich olive-green, with a peculiar velvety texture, anything but easy to imitate.

The next day the water is cold grey, almost white, and the mountain full of various new greys and deep purples, with an entirely new texture not at all velvety.

[1] This for reasons stated in a chapter on the relation between photography and painting.

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Now, the question is, whether the painter, in continuing to paint the effect of the 10th of July on the 11th, is painting from nature or from memory.

He is painting from *memory*. It is self-deception on his part to fancy that he is painting from nature merely because he is working out of doors.

And day after day there is a new and brilliant effect; inconceivably more brilliant in its imposing presence than the painter's fast-fading recollection of what he saw on the 10th of July. If he is determined to finish the picture from nature, in the sense of direct copyism of the hues before him, there are only two ways of doing it. Either he may paint from nature day by day, and so make his picture intensely unnatural, by mixing together a hundred incompatible and contradictory effects, or he may paint whenever the chosen effect shall recur, which may be five or six times in a twelvemonth.

It might be objected that in working from nature he would at least get the *form* of the mountain; *that*, at least, might be expected to remain stationary.

No; the form of a mountain under changing light is the most unstable thing in the world, except that of a sea-wave. *The perception of mountain form is entirely dependent on effect.* A great, rough boss on the side of a mountain is its principal feature one minute, and the next you cannot find it,—seek as you will, you cannot find it any more than if the thing had been fairly chiselled away by the hand of a mighty sculptor. Rocks alter in apparent shape as the light changes. A wreath of mist creeps stealthily, and shows you a chasm you never suspected yesterday; a sunbeam falls, and a great crag leaps out to bask in it like an eagle from the copse. And after a certain practical apprenticeship, the student at last discovers that the *only* truth of landscape-painting is temporary effect, and that *real form belongs to sculpture alone.*

It is unnecessary to explain that clouds can never be painted from nature. Even the slowest of them are full of rapid and continual change, which, however little seen by unobservant people, is only too evident as soon as one attempts to draw them. The utmost that can really be got from nature of a complete *sky* is a rude pencil memorandum of the arrangement of its principal masses, not pretending to form in any part of it, still less to colour. A rapid draughtsman may,

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however, get a tolerable pencil outline of a single cloud, if he tries for that only. But all attempts to paint skies from nature are futile. Constable's way of sketching them in oil may have served occasionally for a rude memorandum of the relations of colour in a common lowland sky, but he had to sacrifice the forms.

Trees may be painted from nature if they are near to us, and on condition that we work only for two hours at a time on the same picture, and in lowland scenery where there is much sameness of effect.

Rocks admit of careful and accurate painting from nature, so of course does a great precipice, if we are near to it. A great deal of good material for artists who paint from nature is to be had along our own coasts. The cliffs on the southern coast are excellent subjects, and the climate not unfavourable.

Water may occasionally, as for instance in rapidly running streams, be painted from nature, because there the same forms are continually reproduced by the effect of the submerged stones on the surface of the water; but great expanses of broad rivers and lakes cannot be painted from nature at all, because they change incessantly. It is needless to add that the sea cannot be copied in the strict sense, though it may, no doubt, under certain circumstances, be wise to paint it from memoranda in the presence of nature.

In the selection of climate, a painter who works from nature on pre-Raphaelite principles ought to permit himself to be guided by his practical convenience, and not by the splendour of the scenery.

Of all climates that are classed as "temperate," that of the Highlands of Scotland is the very worst for painting from nature. The continual prevalence of rainy weather, the incessant changes of effect, the intense brilliance of the colour, subject everywhere to sudden and violent revolution, the frequent occurrence of low rain-clouds which hide the hills much more effectually than a cloak hides the human form,—all these objections are in the aggregate insuperable, and not to be lightly laughed away as small evils which a little resolution would overcome. The Highlands of Scotland are a noble field for painters from memoranda; but artists who wish to work from nature ought not to think of going there.

On the other hand, lowland France is a perfect climate for

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painting from nature. On the borders of Burgundy and Champagne, on the banks of the river Yonne, it is possible to work from nature as many days in one year as you would get in seven years in the Highlands.[1] And those French subjects, if not so grand as the Highland scenery, are infinitely *prettier*, infinitely easier to deal with, and, I should imagine, could be worked up into more popular pictures.

Painters who are not much accustomed to paint mountains from nature are invariably defeated by the subtlety of the natural lines; the extreme refinement of form, so different from the vulgar exaggerations of many popular artists, the infinity of detail, and the impenetrable mystery which veils it all as with enchantment. Add to these difficulties the tremendous one of Nature's *changefulness*. Every day she offers some new effect to the student; some days she offers two or three hundred, any one of which, in its glorious and august presence, seems to him more noble and more worthy to be painted than the one he has already selected. The temptations of the new effects are to beginners quite irresistible. They alter their work to suit some effect seen more recently, and so ruin it. As for the recent effect being grander than the one first chosen, it is generally a mere delusion, for the comparison instituted by the painter cannot really be *between the two effects*, as they occurred in nature, but between his strong and vivid recollection of the effect of to-day, and his worn-out impression of the effect he saw a fortnight ago; and no wonder, if, after a comparison of this kind, the most recent effect should appear the more noble and beautiful. An experienced workman makes his choice of effect carefully, but once chosen he abides by it, and relies upon it, nor can all the enchantments of subsequent splendour turn him one instant from his purpose. A good way to guard oneself against this besetting temptation of recent effects is, to make memoranda of them all as they occur, even though it may interrupt the progress of the picture. These memoranda will always be valuable, and they serve to allay the instinctive desire to represent everything that moves and excites us.

[1] Farther south, in Provence, and even in Spain, the artist is still more sure of the same effect at the same hour for many successive days. But the monotony is very dreadful in its effect upon the mind, and the variety of the Highlands is a thousand times more entertaining.

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The impenetrable mystery of nature is a great cause of defeat to young artists who, even when they have skill enough to draw firmly and accurately, can so rarely attain that wonderful evanescence of execution which represents just so much of objects as we see of them in nature *and no more.* No object is ever well drawn that is completely drawn, nor can any picture ever have the look of reality, in which details, however numerous, are all brought out with perfect definition. It does not signify how much work there may be in a picture; where every detail is thoroughly defined, it will always look poor; and a rapid sketch by a real artist, if only mysterious enough, will have more power over the mind, and recall more mightily the infinity of nature, than any quantity of perfectly definite labour. Now the difficulty of rendering the mystery of Nature is intimately associated with the other difficulty occasioned by her changefulness. She generally defines *something;* some fragment of the outline of an object comes out clearly for a moment, whilst a great part of the same outline lies in various degrees of semi-definition, and the rest of it is untraceable altogether. This for perhaps two seconds, but the third second the very part of the outline which was untraceable may have become the clearest and most definite, the part that was definite at first being now quite vague or perhaps entirely invisible. Such changes occur incessantly in every detail of a great mountain's front, even in the serenest weather. Any attempt to paint such a detail by mere ocular copyism must therefore be futile, for a touch cannot be laid before it will become falsified by these minute changes; changes by ordinary eyes unnoticed and uncared for, but which cannot long be ignored by any practical student.

Mountains in nature are full of exquisite and refined *form,* needing most masterly skill in drawing for even an approximate rendering, such skill as only three or four men now alive possess,—such skill as the rest of us may humbly labour for and aspire to. How shall we follow the lines of their innumerable streams?—how render the roundings of their infinitely various surfaces, the delicate moulding of the swelling forms between the streams, the projections of the descending slopes throwing all the sculpture of the great mountain front into intricate fore-shortening, full of difficult perspective? The very best of us can but give a sort of abstract of mountain. No man ever

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really drew a mountain front in its infinite fulness, and no man ever will draw one, for such work is beyond all human power. The most masterly mountain painting in the world is nothing but a well-selected abstract and abridgment, choosing the most expressive lines, but not rendering one line out of ten. And in those lines that we do render, how are we to approach the ineffable tenderness and subtlety of nature? What the coarseness of our faculties exaggerates into strong curves are often so slightly different from straight lines that nothing but the photograph can render them without either omitting the curve altogether or destroying its perfect delicacy by exaggeration. And is not the habit of exaggeration just as often a sign of mere bluntness and coarseness as of noble emotion? We may exaggerate because we feel strongly, but we far oftener exaggerate because we do *not* feel delicately. Perfect drawing, like perfect cookery, or perfect rowing, or riding, or sailing, or indeed anything else that men do, becomes in its latest advance an exceedingly delicate business, dealing with subtle distinctions which the untrained faculties cannot perceive at all. For the perfectly trained man, however strong he may be, is also much refined by his training, and in his strongest exercise of power is full of grace and gentleness and self-restraint, only untrained and inexperienced hands using violence. And the more refined the skill of the draughtsman the less he will need exaggeration, owing to his habitual self-government and moderation, from which the slightest departure is at once recognized as the sign of overpowering emotion. It is like the writing of a great master in words, who will express himself strongly rather by the exact and *adhesive*[1] fitness of his words to the occasion than by their violence; or like the hostility of a perfectly refined lady, who will inflict acute torture in the gentlest phrases, whereas her sisters in Billingsgate, coarser but not so cruel, are obliged to seek the most sounding epithets.

Of all exaggeration in landscape-painting the commonest is exaggeration of height in high objects, and consequently of

[1] In good joiner's work the strength consists very much in exquisitely true *fitting*. If a piece of wood is perfectly fitted to its place, it is easy to make it stick there without using violence; and if a word is well fitted, it will stick also and for ever.

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steepness in their sloping lines. This is universal with all landscape-painters, and I believe the landscape-painter never lived who did not habitually exaggerate height and steepness. But no one ever exaggerates the length of a horizontal line. If, for instance, a mountain to be true ought to be two feet high and six feet long in a large picture, the chances are that a painter will make it about three feet high and five feet long. Turner exaggerated in this way habitually; but there is no instance in which he exaggerated the proportionate length of a horizontal line. Our most rigid topographical painters may ultimately, if they work in entire submission to photography, and with its continual guidance, come to produce unexaggerated work; but if ever such work shall be exhibited nobody will believe it to be true, because it will fail to give the *impression* of steepness and height that Nature produces on her own scale, with exactly the same lines. I have occasionally, for an especial purpose, made rigidly unexaggerated topographical drawings; but they always look so flat and tame that people intimately acquainted with the scenery never know what they are intended for, and I have always to *prove* their truth by a comparison with photographs of the same places. Now, it is evident that as a painter cannot always be at hand with a portfolio of photographs to defend, in hours of reasoning, the literal exactness of accurate work, such work, in his absence, must continually be slighted as feeble, and even condemned as unfaithful.

If landscape-painters painted on thin sheets of vulcanized india-rubber, instead of canvas, their pictures might be made tolerably true by a simple process. It would then only be necessary to stretch the india-rubber sheet horizontally, and the drawing would come, in a rude way, nearly right. Some painters would need more stretching than others, but even Mr. Newton, the truest painter of Highland landscape who ever lived, would need a little stretching. His noble "mountain gloom in Glen Coe" shortens the horizontal length of the rocky mass in the middle distance, and so exaggerates its vertical height.

You will, however, constantly find that there is a notable difference beween the exaggerations of true men and false. When a true artist exaggerates, it is not from coarseness of perception, but strength of enthusiasm, whereas the false one

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exaggerates one fact merely because he is blind to all the rest. In mountain drawing, in addition to the exaggeration of height and steepness already mentioned, bad painters always exaggerate ruggedness, and always curvature; whereas good ones, though they usually exaggerate *height*, because they are forced to do so, in order to produce the impression they desire, rarely exaggerate curves and projections with anything like violence, because they perceive and relish the reserve and delicacy of nature. The reader would understand this at once if he had the opportunity of comparing one of Turner's mountains with any specimen of mountain drawing by our third-rate water-colour men.[1]

The supreme difficulty in painting from nature is to know what to take and what to leave, how far to follow nature, how to select the most essential and mutually helpful truths. We *cannot* have all the truths, do what we will.

How far are we to be slaves to the subject, and when are we to act in something like independence of it?

All painting from nature includes a great deal of painting from memory, and this is even rendered more difficult out of doors than in the studio, by the presence of other and embarrassing facts which it costs us a great effort to reject. It is true, for example, that in painting our mountain from nature we have to colour from nature, but in quite a peculiar sense, not in the way of simple imitation, and matching of particular tints. The colour of the mountain never continuing the same for a single hour, how is it possible to match its hues? If you match them for a few square inches of your picture to-day, and match the other hues for a few square inches to-morrow, what good will come of it? Will not the harmony of your picture

[1] If the reader cares to follow out the subject of exaggeration as it affects our popular types of figure painting, he will find, on comparing what are considered good Academy studies with photographs of the same models, that figure painters have a constant habit of exaggeration in the *volume* of muscle, and that they mark all projections too violently on the human form, just as the landscape painters do on the mountains. This makes photographs of the naked figure look thin and ridiculous, for none but the best-made persons look very classical without their clothes. Yet the photograph is nearly true to the actual form (not *quite*, for several reasons too long to be explained here), and the common Academy study is a bastard ideal made up of the model, much exaggerated, together with confused reminiscences of Raphael and the Greeks.

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be utterly and irretrievably ruined, and the whole work be quite false and monstrous? Then why are you to colour from nature at all, if you may not match the natural tints you see? Why not paint such pictures entirely in the studio? The answer is, that you are to paint from nature in order to avoid falsity, and that you may have the opportunity of always referring to nature for any fact you find it necessary to ascertain. Now, many facts of local colour may be ascertained through and in spite of the intervening veil of transient colour. For instance, in painting a Highland hill in late autumn you may always ascertain (when the weather will allow of you seeing it at all) where the patches of red fern are, and what is their shape, a thing not easy to invent rightly in a studio; and, of the trees in the forest on the mountain's flank, you may see with great precision how far they are reddened by the death of their leaves. But if you merely try to imitate the mountain as you see it, not taking the trouble to use your intellect as well as your eyes, your picture, though painted from nature, will be as false and discordant as if it had been painted in the dingiest studio in Newman Street.

So that self-reliance is one of the first lessons a young artist has to learn, in working directly from nature. He is to get all he can from the natural scene, but to be thoroughly independent of it, and only submit to its guidance just so far as may assist the truth of his work. All slavish, Chinese imitation of separate bits is death and destruction to the whole picture. Nor must any reader misunderstand the reason for this most essential of all principles. The object of every artist who takes his canvas out of doors is to get more truth, yet always harmonious truth. We are not to mix together discordant and contradictory truths, and mere ocular imitation is sure to do so. What there is of simple imitation in good painting from nature is really very slight, for it is modified first by constant obedience to the memory, *often in direct opposition to the facts immediately before our eyes;* and farther, it is overruled by the necessity for compromise in all translation of nature into art, a necessity occasioned by the difference in point of light between flake white and the sun, and the difference in point of depth between ivory black in broad daylight and the intense vacuity of natural darkness. Only the uninformed imagine that the most accurate work from nature is to be accomplished

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without very great reliance on the memory and considerable effort of the intellect. It requires, no doubt, both delicacy of hand and clearness of vision; but it requires, in addition to these, much of that strength of memory, and all that knowledge of the resources of art, which are essential to the painter who works exclusively in the studio. Hence, the very curious and interesting truth that a painter who can produce a good picture in a studio from slight memoranda is more likely to paint well from nature than one who has never done anything else, because he has acquired the habit of self-reliance, and can hold straight on his own path without being allured away from it by the attractions of the ever-changing subject.

The artist who paints from nature must be content to produce little, if he cares for accuracy. Watch a careful painter at work, and you will find his time incessantly divided between two distinct acts,—looking at nature, and putting down what he has seen. First, the retina must receive a strong impression, and then, whilst this remains quite vivid in the memory, it must be got into colour. *But this looking at nature occupies as much time as the actual work of painting.* An artist, therefore, who works directly from nature in the pre-Raphaelite manner, must spend twice as much time on his picture as if he did it from memory and invention in the Turnerian manner. When we take the nature of the two procedures into consideration, there is nothing surprising in this difference.

A curious result in popular criticism of the difference between active and passive looking is, that the critic, who looks passively, finds fault with the painter who looks actively. I have heard such critics declare that no detail was to be seen in nature, and thence deduce the conclusion that painters ought not to paint detail. But the true painter does not paint what an unobservant spectator sees, but *what he sees himself*, which is a different matter. It may be readily believed that to people who never really look at nature, no details are visible: it is also probable that the broadest effects of light, and the most obvious facts of form, are never seen by them; but let us repudiate the doctrine that a painter is to regulate his expression of natural truth by a reference to the degree of information on the subject possessed by people who have not yet learned the use of their eyes. When the function of the

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painter shall be rather better understood, let us hope that this imbecile doctrine, that he has no right to see deeper and know more than other people, will die like its sister doctrines, that have so long retarded the advance of science; let us even hope that the world will ultimately perceive how the especial duty and function of the artist is precisely to see farther than the rest of mankind, and to lead the eyes of all men to the deepest truths of nature.[1]

It is needless to observe that no landscape can be painted from nature on such a scale, or with such a degree of finish, as would demand more than a very few weeks for its completion. The changes in local colour produced by the continual advance or decline of vegetation are so incessant and so great, that to paint longer than three or four weeks on one canvas, would generally involve the registering of inconsistent and contradictory facts, and consequently destroy the truth of the work. In the depth of winter, however, a longer time may be given; and with a tent it is as easy to paint from nature in winter as in summer, except that the days are shorter.

Before quitting the subject of painting from nature, I desire to add a few observations on the advantages and dangers of the practice.

The advantages are twofold; some of them belong to the picture, and others to the artist.

A picture which is painted from nature, if well done, is sure to contain many truths which would have escaped the strongest memory in the studio, unless aided by memoranda as copious in detail as the very picture itself. Such works have, therefore, a peculiar value for their authenticity, independently of their

[1] I leave this as it was originally written, but will add some farther observations. The younger English painters in 1860 were certainly *looking too hard* into natural detail, so that they lost the perception of masses, and of the tonic weights and values of masses; and besides this they were powerfully affected by colours, as distinguished from colour. The quarrel between them and the ignorant portion of the public was not simply between greater and less information, but (perhaps in a still more marked degree) between people who lived in an inflamed state of the perceptions (the artists) and people who lived in a benumbed and frigid state. The artists had much reason on their side, but not all reason. They were in that state of excitement which seems to be necessary to make men perceive new truth, but which at the same time makes them incapable of perceiving truths in their just relations.—1873.

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intellectual or artistic value. When strictly topographical, as Seddon's Jerusalem, in the National Gallery, or Brett's Val d'Aosta, they considerably exceed the most perfect photograph in interest and value as records of the scene they represent. The details cannot be quite so accurately drawn as in the photograph, nor so minute, but *there are more of them in the picture;* and, in addition to this, we have the facts of colour and atmosphere, which have a great deal to do with our impression of any natural scene, and which it is consequently very desirable to preserve in a record of it.

The advantages of painting from nature are, however, still more striking as they concern the artist himself.

It is not for what he *does*, but for what he *learns*, that the practice is so useful. Whilst he is painting a scene under one effect, he sees it under a thousand, and is incessantly occupied in comparing them. He is always learning something which he did not intend to learn; knowledge of all kinds being brought before him as he sits at work by the inevitable changes of the natural scene. He intends to paint Ben Cruachan in clear weather, and he has not been two days at work before the whole mountain is veiled in a half-transparent mist. If the painter has the true temper of the student, instead of being angry at the mist, he will set to work and study it, and learn the laws of evanescence. Round about his tent, in the intervals of painful labour, he will find a thousand objects of interest—beautiful plants and mosses, delightful studies of rock and tree forms—which he may as well sketch while he has the opportunity, and about which he consequently learns a great many truths which have nothing to do with the particular picture he is engaged upon, but which will be of the greatest use to his education.

The dangers of painting from nature are more obvious. It undoubtedly weakens the memory and deadens the inventive faculty, and that to such an extent, that if persisted in without frequent alternation with studio work, or unless counteracted by the continual practice of drawing from the memory with the express object of preserving its power, the habit of painting from nature may deprive the artist of that faculty altogether. The simple imitation of nature must precede, but ought by no means to preclude, the exercise of the memory and the practice of painting *as a fine art*, which is absolutely impossible so long

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as we are held down to the strictly accurate copyism of natural detail. It is an inexpressible relief to eyes and hands jaded with the wearing toil of mechanical imitation to revel in the happy elysium of the memory, and realize the day-dreams of invention; and again, it is often a salutary and refreshing change to turn from this exciting poetry of the art to the brave scientific prose of the most determined imitation. This action and reaction of all large intellects between the real and the ideal, the fact and the dream, is so universally necessary to their healthful life, that they always *will* have it somehow, either in their art or out of it. James Watt refreshed himself with fiction, and Shelley braced himself with mathematics. The painter may find the two elements in the practice of his own all-embracing art, and alternate between the labours of observation and the pleasures of memory, to the perplexity of his critics, but with substantial benefit to his own nature, because in obedience to its profoundest laws.—1860.

NOTE.

This essay was for the most part written in my tent in the Highlands, in the intervals of actual landscape-painting direct from nature. I did a good deal of hard work in that way, as the younger English artists used to do fourteen or fifteen years ago. We were quite right in taking palette and canvas into the presence of the scenery we loved, but we should have derived more advantage from our studies, and made more satisfactory progress in the art of painting, if, instead of trying to make complete pictures out of doors, we had confined ourselves to good broad artistic *daubing* for tone and light, in oil-studies done simply for our own improvement and not for public inspection. English landscape-painters ought to have known the value of this kind of study, for they belong to the country of Crome and Constable; but many of the younger ones were led into a wrong direction by the pre-Raphaelite figure-painters and by the recommendations of Mr. Ruskin. It is difficult to speak quite justly of Mr. Ruskin's influence in a little

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space, because it has been complicated in its effects, but he did great harm to many of the younger landscape-painters, though no doubt with the very kindest and best intentions. He had two very strong and catching enthusiasms, the enthusiasm for natural magnificence and the enthusiasm for novelty and discovery in the Fine Arts. Many of us were fully prepared to be partakers of these enthusiasms, by the same influences of literature and science which had excited them in Mr. Ruskin himself. It was our great delight to live with the magnificence of nature, and to do, in art, what had never been done before. We lived most happily in the wildest solitudes, and we attempted to paint effects which the elder landscape-painters had never recorded upon canvas. But our ardour was not really and fundamentally artistic, though we believed it to be so. It came much more from a scientific motive than from any purely artistic feeling, and was a part—though we were not ourselves aware of it—of that great scientific exploration of the realms of nature which this age has carried so much farther than any of its predecessors. Whilst botanists and geologists were occupied in investigating the construction of landscape, we investigated its aspect, and the expedition which became subsequently known as *A Painter's Camp in the Highlands* was as much a scientific expedition (to compare small things with great) as the voyage of the *Challenger*. The distinction between scientific and artistic feeling as applied to landscape-painting may be easily and firmly defined. The thorough *artist* is always occupying himself about the effect of his technical arrangements, and he keeps steadily in view one object, which is to produce a certain emotion in the spectator,—the emotion of awe, delight, or melancholy, as the case may be. The thorough artist is always absolutely regardless of truth except just so far as it is conducive to his artistic purposes, and he goes to nature simply to give himself emotions which he can communicate by his art to others. Now, our temper in going to nature was very different from this. We went in the search for rigorously accurate truth, and for new truth, which is an entirely scientific state of mind. Our pictorial work was as much a scientific exposition as the chapters on the structure of the Alps in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*. And I perceive now, having learned to distinguish between the scientific and artistic spirits, that the proper expression for what I learned in the Highlands (I learned a good deal there in an irregular way) would have been, not pictures, but a book with coloured illustrations.

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It was a manifest destiny that the English school of landscape should become ardently scientific in this century, because our race has so little natural gift or aptitude for what is purely artistic, that whenever we can get some other interest under the outward guise of art we are quite sure to follow after it with eagerness. Thus in figure-art our countrymen always run after literary interest, and the scientific interest of recent landscape discovery led many of us into that very pitfall which Leslie foresaw in the year 1855 when he said with a degree of personal emphasis so unusual with him that it expressed an unusual sense of the importance of his words, "The Fine Arts are often selected as themes affording opportunities for the display of eloquence and learning; and in apparently profound dissertations, accompanied often with much valuable information, theories are not unfrequently advanced utterly adverse to the right progress of Art—theories the more dangerous for the talents with which they are advocated; and from the peculiar fashions at present dominant in criticism, I have no hesitation in expressing my conviction that the thing, just now, most in danger of being neglected by painters is the *Art of Painting;* and that want of patronage is far less to be dreaded than the want of that which patronage should foster."

Looking, then, to progress in the art of painting alone, and not to scientific discovery, what is the wisest course in our work directly done from nature? The most experienced landscape-painters of the generation immediately preceding ours were agreed in the conviction that it was useless to paint pictures from nature, because effects would not stay to be painted. For some years the younger English artists hoped otherwise, but now these men (no longer young men) have also come to recognize the necessity for painting *pictures* in the studio. At the same time we believe that a painter cannot paint anything well in the studio unless he has previously exercised himself in painting things of the same kind direct from nature. If this should fall into the hands of any young landscape-painter, let me tell him that all recent experience has fully confirmed this view, and that the right course to acquire at the same time both technical certainty and natural knowledge of the kind most suitable to the purposes of the artist, is to make as many studies as possible in the material that he will afterwards use in his own painting-room; leaving each study when Nature, in her transience, leaves him, or at the most carrying it forward only just so long as his memory of the effect remains quite clear and

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vivid. Oil-painters ought to study in oil from nature, making what the French call *ébauches*, that is *good daubs*, daubs in which the tones and hues are right in the large masses, with no more attention to detail than is quite compatible with this rightness. Painters who intend their pictures to be in water-colour, should, of course, employ water-colour for their studies. The best continental artists always go through an immense amount of this serious kind of daubing, and that is why they often paint so well in mass and tone. It was the mania for scientific detail which hindered the progress of Englishmen twenty years ago.

Another thing has to be said which no student of landscape ought to be ignorant of. The study of landscape is not a good initiation into the technical art of painting. Mr. Peter Graham, the admirable landscape-painter (one of the most thoroughly accomplished landscape-painters the world has ever seen) told me that in his opinion—and I am profoundly convinced of the truth and justice of this opinion—landscape does not afford good material for early study, on account of its extreme intricacy and the difficulty of determining the exact value of what you have done. He believes, and so do I, that the shortest road to good landscape-painting is an indirect road, and that he himself got his first initiation into the mysteries of landscape effect through constant observation of the delicate play of light and shade in a gallery of statues. He earnestly recommends the practice of portraiture as the best of preliminary training. It is a complete mistake to go to landscape under the impression that it is easy. The naked figure, difficult as that also is, is a simple object in comparison with a forest or a mountain. We ought to proceed, in study, from simplicity to intricacy, and the great difficulty in landscape is to find anything that is simple enough for early study.—1873.

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III.

PAINTING FROM MEMORANDA.

WHEN new ways of doing things become fashionable, we are too apt to consider the old ways altogether obsolete. We do not easily see at first that the new method may only be useful for the production of a certain limited order of things, and that the old, instead of being abolished and superseded by the new, may be destined to endure along with it, and live for ever by its side.

When our younger painters first began to finish their works from nature, the greater part of them believed, in their secret hearts, that the art of painting from memoranda in the studio was thenceforth doomed to extinction. They did not perceive that this other art rests on its own grounds, has its own reasons for existing, and is a necessary result of certain causes in nature itself, and in the constitution of man, which causes have lost none of their force because some artists have taken their easels out of doors.

In some essential respects a picture painted from memoranda is likely to be more valuable than one painted directly from nature. It may not be so accurately imitative, but it is likely to be more harmoniously and equally worked out, truer in effect, and better in technical execution. It will also have a higher value as an intellectual product, if the intellect of the artist be of a sufficiently elevated order to make it desirable that its presence should be visible in his work.

The action of the imagination is more vigorous when the bodily sight is occupied by no real scene. Hence imaginative painters have a well-grounded dislike to painting anything

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more than mere studies from nature. For to a great artist the imaginative faculty is the most precious of all his gifts, and he, therefore, instinctively places himself in the conditions most favourable to its free and happy exercise. Those conditions are, first, complete bodily comfort, and, secondly, a certain restriction of space. A good room offers both the comfort and the restriction.

It is needless to point out that, however imaginative a great artist may be, he is also intensely observant. When in the presence of glorious natural scenery, it is not the imaginative part of him which works best, but the observant. All his intellectual power is then concentrated on the faculty of observation for the enrichment of his memory. No one will be surprised at this who has any conception how laborious the act of artistic observation really is. It absorbs for the time nearly all the mental energy of the painter, and, in those rare cases where the imagination does really work in the presence of nature, it is because the observant faculty is not developed to its full power and activity.

The painter from memoranda, therefore, divides his labours into two distinct portions. In working from nature, it is his business to observe, note down, and accumulate an immense miscellany of natural facts. In the painting-room his imagination governs the creation of works of art, in obedience to the laws of nature, and with the help of memoranda taken from nature.

Another reason why the imagination works better when it is shut up between four walls is this: to an imaginative person with a retentive memory, it is extremely desirable that all his ten or twenty thousand impressions should be equally accessible and equally unobtrusive; but in working from nature, the last impression is for a time very obtrusive indeed, and puts all the impressions that remain in the memory into a state of temporary eclipse. This is very disagreeable to an imaginative painter, because he likes to have equal and absolute power over all his accumulated impressions, so as to realize whichever he will, and retain it without interruption from other causes, until it is realized. Now, whatever effect you choose for a picture which you are painting from nature, you may be sure that, long before you have finished it, some other effect will present itself whose glorious *presence* will seem to you more worthy to be represented than your fading recollection of the

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one selected. This kind of interference an imaginative painter instinctively avoids, and when he shuts himself up in a room, it is that he may have all his facts and impressions under perfect control, and protected from the intrusion of other impressions which are foreign to the subject he intends to realize.

In all this there is no distrust of, or infidelity towards, nature, but the reverse. There is an acute consciousness on the part of the artist of his own too great sensitiveness to new impressions, against which he instinctively protects himself by opaque walls of masonry. A picture painted from nature, in the strict sense of copying, tint for tint, exactly what the painter saw, would not be true, but monstrous; for it would consist of unrelated fragments of different effects, associated as unprofitably as leaves taken at random from a hundred volumes and bound together in one. Even in painting from nature, as I have shown on another page, the artist has to remain faithful to some selected effect, of which he preserves a memorandum, and utterly to refuse and reject all the effects which come after it; so that he does not really copy nature, hue for hue, but paints from a memorandum, or from memory, aided by reference to nature for certain facts. And I also showed, that even these facts have to be *twice transposed* before they can be put into the picture: once from the passing effect to the one selected, which usually involves a complete change of colour, and very frequently even of form; and again from the natural scale of light to the pictorial subdivided scale, another transposition which destroys all chance of real imitation. If to these transpositions you have to add the changes introduced into every particle of the natural scene by the imagination of a truly creative or poetical landscape painter, does it not seem doubtful whether there can be any use in his painting from nature at all? Would it not be mere self-deception on his part, to set up a tent on the mountains, under pretext of painting from nature, when everything he saw had to be transposed three several times before he could make any use of it?

1. From the effect visible at the moment to the one selected when the picture was begun.

2. From the natural scale of light to the pictorial subdivided scale.

3. From the natural order to the imaginative composition.

So that, after all, there is not such a very wide difference

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between a picture done from nature and one done in the studio, as to the direct copyism of facts. For if you copy facts from nature, without carefully observing at least the two first transpositions, there can be no *truth* in your work; and if you do not, or cannot, add the third, *which revolutionizes the arrangement of every particle*, your picture will have slight value as a work of art. And between a picture painted out of doors, in which all the three transpositions were accomplished throughout in a masterly manner, and another similar picture, done in the studio by the help of abundant memoranda, for the facts to be transposed, there can scarcely be much difference in point of authenticity. The superiority in technical execution is nearly sure to be on the side of the studio picture; and this superiority has great weight with artists, especially with the most accomplished ones.

The reasons why the technical superiority is likely to be found in the studio picture are the physical comfort of a large studio, its perfect preparation of *means* of all kinds, and the absence of hurry caused by the permanence of memoranda in comparison with the transience of nature.

Of all the occupations of men, I can at this moment remember none, not involving some considerable degree of bodily movement and exercise, which the persons devoted to them are in the habit of following without the shelter of some kind of building. Even joiners and blacksmiths, whose muscular exertion is sufficient to enable them to resist ordinary degrees of cold, are in the habit of working in forges and workshops. And of all the trades followed in a metropolis like London, there is not one which is practised in the open air when there is the choice of practising it under cover. The reason for this is, that the open air, however pleasant under certain circumstances—as, for instance, to sportsmen—is full of an immense variety of small annoyances and interruptions, which so seriously hinder most kinds of labour, that the workers, in self-defence, protect themselves by walls and roofs, and actually find it more profitable in the long run to pay rent for a building to shelter them whilst they work than to work in the open air.

The annoyances I speak of here are all but unknown to sportsmen; but they are very well known to painters. When in vigorous exercise a man will easily resist a degree of inclemency in the weather which would kill him if he were to take a chair and sit still in it for eight or ten hours every day. I

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have ridden on horseback and pulled in a boat in every conceivable variety of bad weather without taking the least harm; but I have been laid up for a month in consequence of a few hours' imprudent painting from nature. And of all the premature deaths of landscape-painters, I believe that a large percentage might be distinctly traced to the habit of painting or studying in the open air.

It is not, however, as it affects the health and longevity of artists, but the technical perfection of their work, that we have at present to consider the utility of the studio. It tends to technical excellence by protecting the artist from small interruptions and annoyances.

There is no doubt that it is very miserable to human nature generally to be out of doors in a state of compulsory quiescence. There is always something to plague one. Either it is too hot, or it is too cold, or there are flies, or one is on a wasp's nest, or it rains, or the sunshine dazzles one's eyes, or the movement of the water wearies them, or some other such little misery maddens the unfortunate student. The artist who should allow himself to be disturbed merely because a gnat was regaling itself on his blood would accomplish little. The resolute ones work on in serene calm when sucked by several gnats at once. Practically, however, I confess that there are limits to this endurance, and I never could work patiently under the stimulus of more than six gnats at a time.

A friend of mine, a resolute painter from nature, tells me that he never allows moderate rain to stop him, even though it falls on the canvas itself. Still, drops of water do no good to a carefully laid surface of oil-colour, and rain is a hindrance to the technical art of painting. Then there are the extremes of heat and cold, the burning glare of Oriental suns, the icy blast of a Highland winter, all to be borne patiently, if such subjects are to be painted from nature. There are some sketches and studies which no painter can look at without a sensation of awe at the endurance they prove, like the awe which other people feel when they read of some terrible military retreat or arctic exploratory expedition. Gentlemen who follow painting merely as a polite amusement, and lay it aside whenever it becomes arduous or unpleasant, have little conception of the energy and resolution of mind, and firm bodily endurance, which those men need who have to live by their art and really

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face its hardships. Against some of these hardships I am happy to think that my studio tent is an effectual protection. Henceforth neither wind nor rain need vex the landscape-painter any more.

But a studio tent, comfortable as it is in comparison with the open air, is very inferior to a painting-room. The tent will no doubt contain materials for the execution of a small picture, and even, by removing the central pole, a picture six feet long *might* be painted in it, but the space is still very inconveniently restricted in comparison with that afforded by the studio. If an artist were painting rather a large picture in the tent, he could not get back far enough to see the relations of the masses of colour; and although, no doubt, an accomplished artist can, in a great degree, guess at the effect of what he is doing, and paint without having the opportunity of seeing what he is painting, nevertheless we all like to assure ourselves from time to time that the relative weight of the colour in different parts of the picture has been rightly determined. And for practical convenience, in following out the different processes of painting to a successful and complete result, especially if the work be on a large scale, a great space is extremely desirable. The comfort of a great studio is most conducive to technical excellence. A substantial oak easel, heavy and firm, with a screw to raise and lower the picture without disturbing it, and wheels to move the whole into precisely the best light; a painting-table, with one or more drawers, neatly divided with partitions for colours; shelves with everything that can possibly be wanted at any stage of the work, always at hand, and in perfect order: all these things are helps which no wise man despises, for they make good and beautiful workmanship easier and pleasanter to him. And the absence of hurry in studio-work is another great advantage. In painting from nature, you *must* work rapidly, and you cannot well undertake more than one picture at a time. The changes in local colour occasioned by the ceaseless advance of vegetation are so great, so revolutionary, that it is of little use undertaking any work from nature which will occupy us more than a month. But a month is not enough for a picture which is solidly painted, if all its processes are to be carefully followed, with sufficient intervals for drying. At least three months are necessary for the fair construction of an oil-picture in which impasto is employed, if we allow the right time for drying, paint

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soundly, and do not use perilous driers. Now, in the studio, there is no occasion for any hurry whatever. Your memoranda will be the same three months hence, and you may as well have three or four pictures going on together, letting each dry as long as is necessary. In the modern way of using opaque colour, and obtaining texture by leaving various kinds of surface for the subsequent reception of transparent films, it is frequently necessary that certain parts of the ground-colours should retain the rough marks of the brush, whilst in other parts these marks must be carefully scraped away, so as to leave a surface as smooth as polished ivory. This scraping, on colour not perfectly dry, is quite impossible; and even in the height of summer the thicker parts of a gound-colour will take a fortnight to harden enough to be fit for the scraper. Many of these minor artifices, which contribute so much to the effect of a picture, have to be omitted in work done directly from nature; and hence the common assertion of French critics like M. de Lasteyrie, that we English do not understand the technical art of painting—an accusation for which there is this degree of foundation, that in our works from nature we are often obliged to neglect a variety of cunning little expedients which lend a great charm to the best studio pictures. And it does, indeed, seem very possible that in a school like ours, where the custom of working from nature is extremely prevalent, the artist *craft* is in some danger of being neglected and lost for mere want of the leisure and convenience necessary to its elaborate exercise. There is a continual temptation, in working from nature, to abridge the orderly succession of processes, and do too much at a time. No doubt a very accomplished artist may, if he pleases, finish a few square inches of his picture when he has the chance of doing it from nature—I mean, when the effect of the moment in some degree resembles the effect originally selected for the work—but it is dangerous for ordinary painters to yield to such temptation. For *them* there is no safety but in the orderly and calm division of the business to be done.

Memoranda for pictures may be accumulated in two ways. Either the artist accumulates memoranda of natural facts and phenomena with no other intention than to provide himself with a kind of encyclopædia for general reference, or he goes to nature with the direct intention of obtaining memoranda for a particular picture. The first method has the advantage of

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keeping his attention so continually alive, that no natural fact can possibly come amiss to him; and an artist of this universally accumulative character, although his particular works may not present any striking imitative truth, is sure to know a great deal more about nature than artists who work only with reference to some picture they have resolved to paint. This was Turner's way of accumulating memoranda, and no doubt a very good way it is, but it has a defect which I must here indicate.

The evil of it is, that although your memoranda may be in the aggregate very voluminous, they rarely afford, when taken in this desultory manner, *all* the information you desire when you come to consult them with reference to some particular work. They fail to inform you about some fact which you find to be indispensably necessary; and the want of authentic information on such points tends to a general weakness of statement in your whole picture; for although you may state some facts with perfect certainty, you feel so uncertain about others that you dare not enter very far into detail anywhere. Perhaps this simple consideration may explain the vagueness of assertion so common in Turner's foregrounds. It is possible in one or two of his more carefully studied foregrounds to discover a few plants and leaves about which there is something approaching to an intelligible statement; and a critic whose object was to exalt Turner, and not to teach truth, might, no doubt, from the immense mass of his works, point to a few such details as a proof that Turner's observation extended to them; but the plain truth is, that Turner hardly ever painted either trees or foregrounds in careful completion, his interest being chiefly concentrated in the distance, and in effects of atmosphere and water. Leslie's criticism, "I look in vain for a specific discrimination in his trees, or in the vegetation of his foregrounds," is perfectly well founded, Turner's vegetation being generally weak and unmeaning; nor would it be possible out of the innumerable works he left behind him to extract anything like a complete illustration of the principal English and French trees, though he devoted two distinct series of works to the scenery of England and France. The reasons for this weakness appear to have been, first, his youthful deference to elder masters, who lived in days when landscape was considered so far beneath the attention of a true student that trees were not thought to be worthy of serious study, and

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were seldom specifically rendered; and, secondly, his own system of memoranda, which was better fitted for dealing with sudden effects of light than the elaborate details of botanical structure. In considering his system of memoranda, we are therefore to bear in mind that it was invented and employed by a painter whose great object was to paint remote distances, and to whom foreground detail was a matter of secondary importance; and we are only to imitate it so far as we ourselves attempt to deal with effects in the sky and distance.[1]

So far as I have been able to examine Turner's memoranda, I should say that those of the sky are nearly all that it was possible to obtain in the time, whilst the memoranda of mountains and trees were generally much slighter than they might have been if the painter had cared to have them elaborate. Being, however, accustomed to charge his memory with infinite details of cloud structure, it is natural that Turner should have relied upon it for everything else to the same extent. Still I see no reason why we should not get abundant memoranda of things that will stay to be studied, merely because we are forced to content ourselves with slight notes of transient things; and I look upon Turner's whole system as rather a result of habit than reflection. As a painter pre-eminently of skies and distances, he had acquired the habit of working almost entirely from memory, aided by the very slightest notes, and he carried the same habit into the foreground. In deliberately reasoning out a system of memoranda, we are, however, to remember that we are not all of us Turners, and cannot, like him, get weak

[1] This criticism of Turner's foliage and foreground drawing still appears to me perfectly just so far as truth of science is concerned, but there are certain qualities in painting which are strangely and curiously independent of scientific truth. There are many of our younger landscape-painters who can paint trees with far more botanical truth than either Turner or Claude, yet their work may be less valuable as art from the want of the qualities of grandeur or grace which charm us in the poetical painters. One of the very best modern masters of foliage tells me that he looks up to Claude as the supreme master, and believes Claude's mother must have been a Dryad. This expression is of itself sufficient to point to the real reason for the admiration. It is a reference to poetic legend, not to science; and the most advanced criticism forgives a great deal of scientific ignorance or error for the sake of poetic emotion. It is as well, however, that we should be clearly aware of the ignorance of the poets, and not set them up as teachers of infallible truth.—1873.

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foregrounds forgiven for the sake of glorious skies and illimitable distances.

Thus of the memoranda by Turner, given in the fourth chapter of the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* the slight notes of a sunrise at page 187 (first edition) are nearly all that could have been obtained in the time; whereas the sketch of Lausanne, opposite page 189, is merely the jotting down of an idea, not by any means a study of the place. All this was perfectly right for Turner; and the longer I live the more I perceive that every artist finds out the natural expression of his own talent. Either Turner's memory was not strong enough to carry the specific characteristics of the different kinds of trees and plants, or he despised these orders of truths and rejected them on system.

In offering a detailed explanation of my own system of memoranda, I wish the reader to observe that it is adapted to my own wants, and would probably have to be modified before it could be as useful to any other artist. Still it is more likely to be of general use than Turner's plan, which relied entirely upon invention, and which, therefore, can be of little use to painters who have no invention to rely upon.

Memoranda may be made to serve a double purpose, the education of the artist and the collecting of materials for pictures. Of the two purposes, the first is never to be lost sight of, and the second ought always to be kept in subordination to it. An artist's first purpose should always be to train himself to perfect power, not to produce this or that agreeable picture.

The other and immediate, yet secondary, purpose of getting materials for particular works has also to be carefully provided for. We are to get all the facts that can possibly be got directly from nature. We cannot really draw the clouds in a sky, so we must be satisfied with a sketch of their arrangement, aided by shorthand notes for colour; but we can draw the principal forms of a mountain with tolerable accuracy, and we are therefore to do so. On the other hand, we cannot get transient colour from nature; but we may get a careful study in oil or water-colour of *local* colour, which we are therefore to try for. The golden rule is to get from nature whatever nature's transience will allow us fairly to obtain.

The secret of success in this is *separation of aim.* It is a bad and lazy plan to try for everything in the same study.

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The right way is to take a series of studies each with its own object: one for form, severe and delicate; a second for light and shade, this one mainly for the *forms of shadows*, a most desirable kind of truth; a third for transient form and colour, this one being a very hasty pencil memorandum with shorthand notes; a fourth being a rapid attempt to realize the effect in water-colour, whilst the impression of it remains quite fresh in the memory. To these five studies a few collodion photographs may be added with advantage, if their exposure is strictly regulated according to the particular kind of detail the artist requires. The photographs are especially useful for reference as to *texture*, which collodion renders perfectly, and which none of the other memoranda can render at all, unless those in water-colour, at the cost of infinite labour. But the collodion photographs do not by any means do away with the necessity for the severe form-study. I cannot stay here to explain why photographs are of little use to landscape-painters as records of form; but the reader will find the whole subject investigated in the chapter on the relation of photography to painting.[1]

It is generally useless to attempt transient form and colour with the brush, which can render neither truly in the time. All that is to be got from nature in cloud-drawing is a rapid pencil memorandum of the natural composition, covered all over immediately afterwards with brief shorthand notes of colour and light. Whilst these shorthand notes are being added, of course the composition will be rapidly breaking up and running into new forms; but we have secured its main lines, nevertheless, and may add some notes of its principal colours. I have a great number of memoranda of Highland effects of this kind taken at all seasons of the year, and I find the shorthand notes upon them valuable to me as records of colour and light. My system of notation once thoroughly mastered, so as to be always at one's fingers' ends, opens new possibilities of veracity to the painter of transient effects, but it is rather complicated and elaborate, and needs

[1] I leave this passage about the photographs as it stands, because one or two experienced landscape-painters tell me they find them very useful; but my own experience for the last few years has been unfavourable to photography, and I never use it now, or even look at it. Photography never gives me *what I want*, though it gives me much I have no need for. An artist can generally get more of what concerns him in half an hour's sketching from nature than he could dig out of the detail of a photograph. —1873.

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some practice before it can be used with the necessary readiness. For there is this peculiarity in all memoranda of transient effects, that they must be done in so short a space of time that there is not a second to spare for deliberation. The brain must be ready and in full action, with perfect command of all its means and materials; the hand must be swift and unerring, the eye eager and piercing. To work thus at utmost speed, and make no mistakes in the application of an elaborate set of signs, it is necessary to have used them long.

I made them, however, as simple as I could, and used no mysterious hieroglyphics, but only plain initial letters. Still, as blue and black and brown all begin with a B, I called blue H, the initial letter of heaven, because the sky is blue; and black I marked N, because night is black. Then, again, as green and grey both begin with G, I called green E, because the earth is green; and as rose and red both begin with the letter R, I called rose F, for flower. With these little changes, I found I could represent a considerable number of colours with one letter only for each.

COLOURS.

Red,	R.	Grey,	G.
Blue,	H. (heaven).	White,	W.
Yellow,	Y.	Black,	N. (night).
Green,	E. (earth).	Brown,	B.
Purple,	P.	Crimson,	C.
Violet,	V.	Scarlet,	S.
Orange,	O.	Mauve,	M.
Lilac,	L.	Drab,	D.
Rose,	F. (flower).		

But as colours in nature are hardly ever pure, I had to find out some way of writing such a combination as bluish grey, and I represented the syllable *ish* by means of a colon, thus, H: G. Then, as the words "warm" and "cold" are much used by artists to distinguish tints into two large classes, I invented signs for them thus: warm △, cold ▽. It was easy to remember that warm was something like a △, and cold the same sign turned upside down.

Then, as all colours in nature are gradated, I required some sign capable of being extended at will over a great surface, without interfering with the other signs, and which might thus indicate gradations either in large spaces or small. For this

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purpose I finally selected a single dotted line : . . . . . Since, however, it was absolutely necessary that I should know which end of my gradation was darker than the other, I put a D at the darker end, and an L at the lighter end, thus—

D . . . . . L[1]

Again, as the same colour would occur in very different degrees of intensity, I required some graduated scale of signs to indicate the degree. I found the following most convenient :—

Yellow	Y.
Strong Yellow	Y.$_{s}$
Intense Yellow	Y.$_{ss}$
Very intense Yellow	Y.$_{sss}$

I needed a simple sign for the word "pale," and another for the word "dark," because these words are of constant occurrence in memoranda of transient effect. For "pale" I took a small open circle °, and for "dark" the same circle filled up •.

Thus °G is pale grey, and •G dark grey.

In taking memoranda of skies, every painter must have perceived that their colours are extremely *metallic;* even poets perceive this, and call the sky "golden," "silvered," "copper," "leaden," and the French poets sometimes call it brazen (*d'airain*). I therefore selected the metals most likely to be useful ; but as their initial letters were the same as some already devoted to colours, I wrote each initial letter of the English word in the corresponding small Greek character. It would have been useless pedantry to take the initials of the Greek words themselves, because I am not in the habit of thinking in Greek. This gave me the following additional signs, which I have since found of great use :—

Silver,	σ.	Bronze,	β.
Gold,	γ.	Aluminium,	α.
Copper,	κ.	Lead,	λ.

The new metal, aluminium, was particularly useful, perhaps the most useful of all, its delicate grey being of constant occurrence in the paler rain-clouds.

[1] I began with this, but afterwards used the dotted line with circles at the ends of it, simply filling up the circle at the darker end.—1873.

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Again, as everybody who is in the habit of reading poetry must have remarked that the poets, when they describe the phenomena of the sky, cannot get on at all without precious stones, and as the peculiar transparency of air and semi-transparency of cloud often really do resemble precious stones, I added a series of abbreviations of the most useful stones, thus, taking the first two letters of each:—

Diamond,	Di.	Topaz,	To.
Ruby,	Ru.	Amethyst,	Am.
Emerald,	Em.	Turquoise,	Tu.
Pearl,	Pe.	Coral,	Co.
Sapphire,	Sa.	Opal,	Op.
Chrysoprase,	Ch.	Lapis lazuli,	La.

These abbreviations are occasionally of great use, though less frequently required than the preceding ones.

We have now got some indication of colour and gradation, but in order to make our memorandum really valuable, we require tolerably accurate notes of light and shade.

There is no time to get these with the brush. It is quite impossible by such means to define the degree in which a light cloud relieves itself against a darker one, before both are transformed, or even to render the delicate differences in light between minute portions of the same cloud's surface. But it is fortunate that, although colour can only be noted down in a rude and imperfect manner, degrees of light can, by a practised student, be noted with accuracy and precision. It is not desirable, for it would be of no use, to note the light of nature as it *is;* we need only set it down as paint is able to represent it. I therefore transpose the scale of Nature's light to my own scale of pictorial light in the memorandum itself.[1]

You may state light and dark with quite sufficient delicacy by means of numbers. I take 100 as my highest light—that is, the sun, and the intense splendour immediately surrounding it; with zero for my darkest dark—that is, a mountain at moonless midnight. All the intermediate numbers represent intermediate degrees of light.

If I had needed more minute distinctions, I might have graduated my light into a thousand degrees, but a hundred

[1] The reader will find a full explanation of this difference in scale between natural and pictorial light in the chapter on the Relation between Photography and Painting.

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were quite sufficient, and the numbers from one to a hundred will express degrees of light with a delicacy and exactness which no combinations of words, however elaborate, could rival. They have also the great advantage of being expressible in *figures*, which are a very perfect kind of shorthand.

In looking over my memoranda, I continually find such distinctions as this: One ridge of mountain is marked 50, another close to it 51; a distinction so extremely delicate that nothing but numbers or art could state it; words certainly could not, and all artistic expression of it would cost too much time. The slightest exaggeration in the light of the second ridge would deprive a third ridge of its relief, and so destroy the truth of the memorandum. By the help of numbers, the gradation sign gains also in significance.

D L

Here is the gradation without the help of numbers. We know that the colour is darkest at our left hand, and lightest at our right; but we do not know whether the gradation is regular or not, nor whether it is strong or faint. Gradation in nature is hardly ever regular; it usually becomes more rapid towards one end of the scale. Let us see how numbers will help us.

40 60 70 80
D L

We see by this that the gradation is much more rapid at our left hand, and that the middle tint is not half-way from the dark to the light, but much nearer the dark.

These figures being written in a very minute hand may be put in all sorts of little places. A mere touch of intense sunshine on a cloud or mountain may be isolated by the pencil-point, and marked with a high figure to indicate the intensity of the light upon it, when the space would be too small to allow of a word being written in it.

My own memoranda of transient effects are covered all over with these signs; but as it always requires some mental effort to decipher and realize such complicated pages, I find it saves time to translate them into colour before painting the effects in studio pictures.[1]

[1] Artists usually have very elaborate plans for study when they are young, and simplify them as they advance in life. If they retain any

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Although we are to rely as little as may be on the memory, we cannot paint away from nature without continual reference to it. Minute difficulties are perpetually arising, which nothing but the memory can solve. In order to paint really well in the studio, we need vast and profound science. It would be difficult to give any just idea of the immense miscellany of information which a landscape-painter must have at his command if he would make the best use of his memoranda. He employs, in fact, at every instant, the whole of his professional education and experience, just as a clever lawyer does in his daily practice, or a skilful general in actual warfare, or an experienced surgeon when he pays his daily visit to his hospital. The amount of knowledge which may be concentrated in the painting of half-a-dozen leaves, or in the covering of one square inch of canvas representing a bit of mountain flank, or a fragment of morning cloud, is so vast that it could not be fairly stated in many such volumes as this, even if words could express such knowledge at all, which they cannot. And all good studio painters, however abundant and minute their memoranda, paint far more from knowledge accumulated in the memory by years of observation, than from the studies and sketches in their portfolios.—1861.

NOTE.

This essay on Painting from Memoranda contains, in its present form at least, no statement which is not confirmed by common experience, but there is an omission in it of the greatest importance, and this omission I hasten to supply. It is found in practice that the value of a memorandum to an artist does not usually depend upon its slightness or its fulness, but upon his previous knowledge of the class of objects or effects to which the memorandum refers. As an illustration of this I may mention ordinary handwriting as it is practised by very rapid and bad writers. It would be entirely illegible if we did not already know the words; it would be impossible

practice for so long a period as eleven years, it must be useful enough to have recommended itself by experience. I have discarded as useless several kinds of memoranda which were recommended in the first edition of this work (especially those for local colour only), but I still use this system of notation, and advise others to use it. The *numbers* especially are valuable, and the gradation signs.—1873.

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for a foreigner, ignorant of our language, to make out what words these signs were intended to represent. Our ability to read bad writing is due entirely to previous knowledge acquired by the most careful practice of writing in our childhood, practice in which every letter was studiously formed. So it is with the memoranda of painters; they cannot, after a lapse of time, read even their own memoranda in any full and perfect sense, unless they have studied material similar to the subjects of these memoranda, with a patient elaboration resembling that of a schoolboy practising his letters. It is found too, that when an artist is painting an oil-picture, it is not necessary that the memoranda actually before him should be painted in oil; a pencil scratch is sufficient for the purpose: but it is necessary that he should have made studies from nature at some former period of his practice, in oil-colour, of natural material similar to the material of his picture. A painter who works from memoranda ought therefore to be a very highly educated painter, for the excellence of his work will depend much more upon the completeness of his previous training than upon the fulness of the memoranda before him.

My present opinion about the practice of landscape, founded upon the observation of methods used by the most able artists known to me, is that all pictures of landscape ought to be painted systematically from memoranda, *never* from nature; but that landscape-painters ought to do a great deal of sincere study from nature in oil-colour, in careful broad daubing for tint and tone, with just so much detail as can be got without sacrificing the truth of large relations. It is better to study detail separately. Animal and figure painters appear to need more of what is called finish in their studies for self-education, and to carry them farther in the way of texture and surface. If you can paint one oak-tree thoroughly well from nature, you will probably be able to paint any other oak afterwards fairly well from a memorandum in pen and ink; if you can paint one sheep, you can paint all sheep; if one horse, all horses. The great danger in painting from memoranda is attempting to paint in that way what would defeat us if it were before our eyes, and the surest of all safeguards is simply to ascertain in preliminary studies how far our knowledge of similar material may carry us in the actual presence of nature. If you have mastered the sort of material you have to deal with, the merest scrawl is a sufficient memorandum; if not, the most detailed study is of no use.—1873.

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IV.

THE RELATION BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND PAINTING.

PHOTOGRAPHY is the blackening and decomposition of a salt by *some* of the solar rays, and these not the luminous ones. If a photograph were really drawn by the luminous rays, it would be far truer than it is. Mr. Hardwich has clearly distinguished between the luminous and actinic rays, or the rays which produce what we call light, and those which effect the chemical changes we habitually call "photography." He says, in his "Photographic Chemistry" (Fourth Edition, p. 61), "The actinic and luminous rays are totally distinct from each other, and the word 'photography,' which signifies the process of taking pictures by *light*, is in reality inaccurate." And, again (page 62), "In exemplifying further the importance of distinguishing between visual and actinic rays of light, we may observe, that, if the two were in all respects the same, photography must cease to exist as an art. It would be impossible to make use of the more sensitive chemical preparations, from the difficulties which would attend the previous preparation and subsequent development of the plates. These operations are now conducted in what is termed a dark room; but it is dark only in a *photographic* sense, being illuminated by means of yellow light which, whilst it enables the operator easily to watch the progress of the work, produces no injurious effect upon the sensitive surfaces."

Photography having been ascertained to be the blackening and decomposition of a salt by some of the solar rays, the next question of importance is *how* these rays blacken it.

And here it is necessary to say a little about Nature's light.

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Let one million represent the sun, the brightest thing we know, and the unit represent the blackness of night, the blackest black we know. If we take this as representative of Nature's scale of light and dark, the most extensive scale attainable on paper may be from a dark five hundred times *lighter* than Nature's dark, to a light a thousand times *darker* than Nature's light, or somewhere between the figures 500 and 1,000.

So that to represent Nature's million degrees we have, let us say, about five hundred degrees.[1]

Nature is very rich, and Art very poor. Nature has a million to spend where Art has five hundred. What is the most prudent thing for poor Art to do? There are two ways of imitating Nature. Art may spend side by side with Nature, degree for degree of light, coin for coin, till all her resources are exhausted, and then confess herself bankrupt. Or she may establish a scale of expenditure suited to her limited resources; and, abandoning all hope of rivalry with Nature, set herself to the humbler task of interpreting her.

And here is the first essential difference between photography and painting; a difference which, of itself, is sufficient to separate them for ever.

Poor Photography spends degree for degree with rich Nature, and, of course, is very soon exhausted; but poor Painting husbands her little resources, and spends a penny for light where Nature spends a pound.

[1] This estimate of the difference between natural sunshine and the white at the command of the painter is not hyberbole, but simple truth. That the sun is more than a thousand times brighter than white paper in ordinary daylight may be positively demonstrated as follows. The white-washed ceiling of a room of moderate size has, from its extent of area, a light-giving power (every visible thing gives off light by reflection) certainly more than a thousand times that of the lighter colours employed in a cabinet picture; yet you can look at the ceiling without pain. But you cannot look even on a white cloud in full sunshine without pain, still less at the sun itself. Not only the sun, but any white thing in sunshine is a thousand times brighter than white paper in ordinary daylight. When you see a strong shadow cast upon white paper, the shaded part looks *black*, and yet any piece of white paper out of doors on a sunny day must be much lighter even in its darkest shadow than a white thing in a room without direct sunshine, on account of the reflections from the sky. I should be glad if any scientific person would invent a measure capable of expressing intensities of light quite accurately in numbers; it would simplify art-theory considerably on questions of light and tone.—1873.

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All photographs, therefore, which attempt to copy Nature's effects of light, lose themselves either in a vacuity of light or a vacuity of shade.

Here is another illustration, but not so good a one as the preceding, because it does not sufficiently set forth the enormous difference in scale between Nature and the photograph.

Nature's power of light is like a great organ with all its vast range of octaves. The photograph's power of light is, in comparison, something like a voice, but a voice of extremely limited compass.

How is the voice to follow the organ in an exercise on the scales?

The voice will sing its own notes in the places where they occur, but must ignore all the rest.

This is exactly the way the photograph imitates Nature. And when Nature plays only in the middle of her scale, photography would follow her with much accuracy if it were not for that fact about the excited film being insensitive to yellow rays.

Now, what is painting?

It is an intellectual and emotional interpretation of Nature, by means of carefully balanced and cunningly subdivided hues. Its powers of *imitation* are extremely limited. However, the eye of the painter, instead of being insensible to everything that is yellow, is as sensitive to gold and orange as to blue, so that in this respect he may do truer work. And in his way of interpreting Nature's light, he has opportunities of compromise and compensation which the unthinking photograph cannot have. So he gets more truths.

With a view to ascertain something of the relative power of light in Nature and Art, I have made a few simple experiments which the reader may easily repeat for his own satisfaction.

People cannot see either pictures or photographs in full out-of-door sunshine. They see them best, and they see them habitually, in quiet, dull daylight without sunshine.

The sun in a picture is usually made of a little flake white, mixed with Naples or other yellow.

The whitest flake white is not so white as snow.

During the winter months I have obtained a great many memoranda of mountain snow. On looking over these memoranda I find that when not illuminated by direct sunshine

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the snow is in many instances considerably darker than the sky; darker even than grey clouds.

And yet I know that the flake white I have to imitate *snow in sunshine* with is, in reality, itself *darker than snow in shadow*.

Our whitest white is darker than many of Nature's ordinary blues and greens and reds.

And our blackest black is lighter than many of Nature's greys.

This last fact is easily ascertained. Hang a common black cloth dress coat on a stand out of doors any moonless night, so as to bring it against the sky. Throw the light of a lamp upon it, and you will find your black cloth coat, the blackest thing you have, a great deal lighter than a clear starlit sky.

And this experiment gives a result infinitely below the truth. A fairer way would be to cast some rays of electric light on the coat, because, as everybody knows who has walked in the streets at night, even gaslight is immeasurably below ordinary clouded daylight, such as we require for seeing pictures.

Well, but though the sky is darker than the coat, there are some clouds visible which, in their turn, are considerably darker than the sky. And the mountain under the clouds is infinitely darker than they are. So here we are in Nature's bass notes; and no art can get down there.

In all photographs which attempt landscape, and include distant and highly illuminated objects, such as mountains and the sky, the sensitive film of the negative has always been so entirely decomposed by Nature's middle degrees of light as to leave no room for farther decomposition by the highest, or else the time of exposure has been insufficient for the due action of Nature's lower degrees of light, so that they have not been able to make any impression.

The consequence of this in the *positive*, with which the public is most familiar, is that all Nature's higher notes are lost in white vacancy, or else all her lower notes in black or brown vacancy.

Thus, in a photograph of the sea,—because the sea is a bright object,—if we want to have the glitter of the wave we must expose our negative so very short a time that any solid objects on the shore will take no effect upon it, and be left blank.

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In the positive, these blank objects will print as brown silhouettes.

We will now examine a few photographs by the ablest hands to see whether this is so. And then we will examine one or two pictures and engravings to see in what manner intellectual art contends with this great difficulty, and how far the human intellect has found means to overcome it.

I have at hand a portfolio of good photographs by professional photographers, and a portfolio of photographs, not so good, done by myself. These will afford ample materials for our investigation.

One of the best photographs of the sea which I have been able to procure in Paris, is a view of sea and sky, with a pier and lighthouse at the spectator's right. It is by E. Colliau, and is entitled "La Jetée." The negative has been exposed a very short time indeed, in order to preserve the light on the clouds and the glitter of the sunshine on the water. These two truths are accordingly obtained, the silvery touches of soft light on the clouds are all admirably rendered, and the glitter of the ripple is accurately recorded too. But the grey shade of the clouds is given in deep brown; and, although the sun is high, the lighthouse, the pier, and the people upon it *are all in silhouette, without the faintest trace of any detail whatever.* Of course, if M. Colliau had exposed his wet collodion negative a few seconds more, he would have obtained the detail in the pier at the cost of his sky, which would have been all decomposed away by the powerful action of the abundant chemical rays, and his negative on development would have exhibited a black sky over a very dark sea, which in the positive would have given us a white sky and pale water, without glitter. But we should have had our pier in the corner quite perfect, and should have been able to see the people upon it distinctly.

A prudent photographer will always, where possible, avoid these discrepancies. The pier was introduced to add a little human interest to the subject, and in this respect with judgment, for one cannot help sympathising with the people on the pier, who are waiting for their friends. But in photography, the great compass of Nature's light should never be attempted, for it can never be even suggestively rendered. And M. Colliau has succeeded in producing better sea-views,

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where there was nothing in the foreground darker than the sea itself, as, for example, in that one entitled "Le mauvais temps," a most valuable memorandum of the action of sea-waves. The peculiar *leaping* of sea-water is perfectly given, and the white crests in the middle distance are as good as may be. This photograph fails towards the edges, where it becomes dark—a common defect in sea-views, on account of their very brief exposure, which M. Colliau has wisely remedied in some others of his by having the positives cut into ovals before being mounted. With the exception of this defect, this photograph is all that one can desire; the light in the natural subject, though excessively high in pitch, being very limited in compass. For the *pitch* matters nothing whatever to the photograph, as that can always be transposed to Photography's own key by an exposure more or less prolonged; but the *compass* is of the greatest importance, because Photography has so narrow a compass, that when the natural subject includes both treble and bass notes, she must pass two-thirds of them in absolute silence.

I have an oval photograph of sea by M. Colliau, with a boat in the middle distance. The time of exposure must have been very brief, for the forms of the waves are quite firm and clear, yet there is nothing black but the hull of the boat. If there had been anything solid in the foreground—as, for instance, a pier—it would have come in silhouette, and spoiled the photograph.

I have another oval of rough sea, by the same manipulator. It includes a fine cumulus cloud, and is altogether wonderful. Where it fails as a study is in the absence of distinction between *foam* and *reflection*. The negative has evidently been exposed long enough for the *foam* to act upon it; so that it is as bright as the glitter, and there is no separating them. A little more exposure, and the middle tints would have blackened the negative all over the surface of the water in the interstices between the spots of foam and glitter. Once this done, the picture would have been destroyed altogether; for the sea would have been one black blank in the negative, and one white blank in the positive.

And now, if we want to know the relation between these marine photographs and a good picture of the sea, it is easy to ascertain it. We have only to compare one of the best

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specimens of marine photography we can find, with one of the best pictures of sea hitherto produced by our realist school.

I will take for this purpose one of Gustave le Gray's marine photographs, and Holman Hunt's exquisite little picture entitled "Fairlight Downs: Sunlight on the Sea."

In the photograph the blaze of light upon the sea is given with perfect fidelity; but in order to get this, and the light on the edges of the clouds, all else has been sacrificed: the shaded sides of the clouds, in nature of a dazzling grey, brighter than white paper, are positively black in the photograph, and the pale splendour of the sun-lit sea—except where it *flashes* light—is heavy and impenetrable darkness. Towards the sides of the photograph, the distinction between sea and sky is wholly lost in one uniform shade of dark brown, extending from top to bottom, without any indication of a horizon; so that, if you were to cut a strip an inch and a half broad from each side of the photograph, no one on looking at the strip would at all suspect that it represented either sea or sky, or anything else in nature. The crowning falsity is, however, the sun itself, which is *darker* than the surrounding clouds, being simply a grey wafer on a white ground.

However, since it is one of the peculiar misfortunes of the photograph that it is not capable of giving two truths at once, not having any method of compensation like that which every painter finds out for himself, we must be satisfied in all photographs of sunlight on the sea with this one truth only—the glitter on the ripple—and not ask for any more. I have observed that simple people always take such photographs for moonlights, and I suspect that they are extensively sold as such. The truth is, that they *do* approach nearer to the character of moonshine than sunshine; but even in moonlit water there is a *diffused* light outside the reflection or glitter, which is lost in these photographs.

It is agreeable to turn from this representation of one truth to a picture which, in about the same superficies, gives us a thousand.

At Mr. Gambart's Winter Exhibition in the year 1858, the reader may have seen a wonderful little picture by Holman Hunt, entitled "Fairlight Downs: Sunlight on the Sea." The sunlight itself in its broad white glare on the water under the sun, and its gradual scattering into glitter to the right hand

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and to the left; in its long lines in the distance, divided by the shadows of the clouds, in its restless flashing on the crests of the little waves far away,—is as true and truer than the photograph: but here all comparison ends, because there is no longer in the photograph anything to be compared with the picture. Where the photograph is simply dark brown, the picture is full of the most delicate gradations, and the sweetest play of hue. Where the glitter is not, we have still the sunlit beauty of the fair sea, which is indeed better and more precious even than the glitter itself, just as the fairness of a beautiful woman is better than the glitter of her diamonds. And there is a hot haze in the blinding distance miles away, and there is a sultriness in the accumulated clouds which shall light up that sea at night with another and more terrible splendour. And then there is the green of the rich land, and the purple of the fallow, and nearer is a mingled glow of scarlet flowers and green leaves, and staring sheep, and a dog, and the shepherd's staff. And all these other facts Hunt could get into his picture because painting is a great intellectual art; an art of compersation, and compromise, and contrast; an art capable of moderation, and subject to mastery. And all these other facts Gustave le Gray could *not* get into his photograph, because photography is not a fine art, but an art science; narrow in range, emphatic in assertion, telling one truth for ten falsehoods, but telling always distinctly the one truth that it is able to perceive.

On comparing photographs with good topographical pen-drawings of the same objects, I find a result very different from anything that many persons would expect. I find the *sum* of detail, in subjects including both distant and near objects, to be much greater in the drawing than in the photograph. Thus, Bisson's Chillon, a magnificent photograph, gives the castle in true detail, but loses the near foliage in black, and the mountain detail in pale brown, like the sky. A good topographical drawing would have given the castle less exquisitely, but we should have had the nearer foliage thoroughly drawn, and the mountain forms defined. I have before me a good positive of the Lac de Gaube, evidently printed from a waxed-paper negative, and therefore a remarkable degree of detail is not to be expected; still few people not accustomed to analyse photographs would be

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prepared, in a photograph of clear weather, such as this one evidently is, to find such a large space of sheer vacancy as the mountain slope on the left. A topographical drawing might be done in a week which would contain ten times as many facts as this photograph.

Having taken a waxed-paper negative of Craiganunie, and since drawn and painted the same subject in various ways, I find that with five or six hours' labour I can get a memorandum containing much more detail than the photograph. The details in the drawing are not so accurately or delicately done; but they are quite accurate enough for artistic purposes, and there are *more of them* than in the photograph.

The collodion process would have afforded more abundant detail; but, to an artist, this additional detail is often of little consequence, being not *the* detail he wants. For the best photograph of any extensive scene never gives more than *partial* detail, however perfect as far as it goes. The artist, too, gives selected detail, that which seems to him the most needful and vitally expressive: and here, ten to one, if he is a good artist, he and the photograph will not be of the same opinion.

It is, therefore, quite impossible to produce good pictures by copying photographs. And this is the reason why Mr. Ruskin, in answer to a malicious accusation against the pre-Raphaelites that they "copied photographs," challenged the accusers to produce a pre-Raphaelite picture themselves, or anything like one, by that process. The challenge was perfectly safe, and has never been responded to.

The way in which artists ordinarily use photographs is this. When their memoranda from nature are not minute enough, as sometimes from circumstances they cannot be, painters will take a suggestion from a photograph, and *invent* details for their pictures, which the photograph rather suggests than contains. This is the practice of some artists; but one of our most popular painters of winter scenery always works from the photograph alone, and never even draws from nature. The study of winter scenery from nature involves, of course, the physical difficulty of resistance to the cold; and it seems natural that a painter who does not use a studio-tent should find painting from photographs in a warm studio pleasanter work than painting from nature in the cold open air of

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December. Even in this extreme instance, however, the true way of stating the case would be to say that the artist works from memory and invention aided by reference to photographs, because there is a good deal of colour in his works, which could not be got from photographs; *and his system of light is artistic and not photographic, a little fact which, of itself, at once precludes the servile copying of photographs.*

Since most artists buy photographs of subjects not often obviously connected with the particular subjects of their pictures, the question naturally suggests itself, whether it would not be desirable for the painter to take photographs himself, which might afford more direct and useful data than any procurable in the shops, as he might then obtain memoranda of the particular subjects he intended to paint. Such a course appears at first sight likely to be peculiarly advantageous to a painter, for the important reason that he might adjust the time of exposure of the negative to the especial result required; and so, by taking several photographs of the same subject, of different degrees of exposure, obtain from their united testimony the various truths of detail he would need for his picture. This suggests itself as a wise and politic course to pursue, for it apparently obviates the greatest inconvenience of photography, its loss of detail at the two ends of the scale. By a careful regulation of the exposure, half-a-dozen collodion negatives of one scene might be made to yield an enormous aggregate of detail in every part of the subject.

It seems also evident that since the wet collodion process is almost instantaneous, certain memoranda of effects of light may be got by its means which are not otherwise attainable; as, for example, the complicated shadows of mountains, which it is impossible to draw truly on account of their swift changing. And, to a painter who has to deal with rich architecture, it seems as if the photograph would be a most useful servant, giving him accurate data for every stone in the most elaborately wrought building.[1] No memorandum of cloud-form is equal to a photograph, for none other can be true, even in outline; whereas the sensitive collodion will arrest in an instant the flying change of innumerable clouds. And,

[1] I speak of exteriors only. Gothic interiors are generally too dark to be photographed in detail.

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in matters of foreground detail, when a painter cannot remain on the spot to finish an elaborate drawing from nature,—as, for example, on a Swiss glacier,—the abundant detail obtainable by a collodion photograph in a few seconds will naturally tempt a landscape-painter to encumber himself with a camera.

For this photography, as an art so imperfect, is a wonderfully obedient slave for the collecting of memoranda, if only its one great peculiarity be humoured a little. Photography cannot often give very much truth at once; but it will give us innumerable truths, if we only ask for one at a time. And a large collection of photographic memoranda, taken by a painter for especial purposes, seems likely to be a precious possession for him.

But here occur other considerations.

Photography affords a very interesting proof of a fact well known to artists, that a certain degree of exaggeration is quite indispensable to apparent veracity. I believe that this is so in literature also; and that no study of human character would ever be generally recognized as true which was not idealized and exaggerated almost to the verge of caricature. A certain extravagance of statement seems in literature essential to effective work, owing to the coarseness of our faculties, which need something stronger than pure truth. But, however this may be in books, it is quite demonstrably so in pictures, as the photograph conclusively proves. Photographs of mountains are hardly recognizable.[1] The most careful topographic drawing, if it looks like nature, is sure to be full of exaggerations. People who are not aware of this can never recognize photographs of distant scenery, however familiar the scenery may be to them; but they will recognize an exaggerated sketch without difficulty. The grandeur of noble scenery excites the imagination. It is incredible how small a space is really occupied, in the picture on the retina of the eye, by that far gorge between the hills that we *know* to be a thousand feet deep, and five miles through. The photograph gives the fact in its stern truth, so many actinic rays and no more, an image so large in proportion and no larger. But the painter always

[1] This depends on the degree of their steepness. A precipitous Alp is recognizable in a photograph, but our English and Scotch hills lose all the majesty they have.—1873.

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sympathises, more or less, with the excitement of the beholder, for he is himself a beholder. And therefore the photographic truth about mountains will always, in its lifelessness, strongly offend the artistic sense, and seem false and inadequate, as, indeed, it is, in relation to the spectator's imagination.

But *all* good painting, however literal, however pre-Raphaelite or topographic, is full of human feeling and emotion. If it has no other feeling in it than love or admiration for the place depicted, that is much already, quite enough to carry the picture out of the range of photography into the regions of art.

This power of the excited imagination to change the actual forms and relative magnitudes of objects I have repeatedly tested by experiment. The best test, for a person who can draw, is to sketch some real scene exactly as it appears to him when excited by its beauty, not in forced coldness or real apathy. Let him afterwards photograph the same subject. On comparing the sketch with the photograph, he will understand the degree in which the fire of imagination affects the forms of things. And what is still more astonishing at first is, that he cannot believe that the photograph is true at all, it seems as if there were something altogether wrong about it. But if he sets up a threaded frame and deliberately *measures* the mountains by the reticulations of the crossed threads, and then coldly copies them on a sheet of paper ruled with lines answering to the threads, he will prove the literal accuracy of the photograph. There is another way to prove it. Let the painter look at the same scene by starlight. In the daylight his imagination is excited by the mountains, and they seem to occupy the whole plane of vision, but at night it is not so: *then the stars tyrannize over the imagination, and the mountains all shrink into a narrow, black, irregular line, tamed into absolute insignificance, and precisely like the brown stain that represents them in the photograph.* So that a photograph of a range of mountains may be a good and serviceable memorandum for a night picture, when they do not affect the imagination much on account of their own vacancy, and the stronger influence of the stars, and yet quite inadequate for any powerful daylight effect when the mountains themselves are mighty. —1860.

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NOTE.

This paper was written in answer to a declaration made by one of my friends to the effect that "the discovery of photography had made painting no longer of any use, since all that painting did could be done much more truthfully by the photograph." This set me thinking, and the result was a rather long and dogmatic essay, of which the one given here is an abridgment. It was a characteristic of the typical English gentleman thirteen years ago to be at the same time totally ignorant of art and disposed to hold it in slight esteem, so that my friend (a very dear friend) quite spoke the language of his caste in saying a thing about photography and painting which expressed contempt for the latter and ignorance of both. It was difficult, at that day, to go much into general society without hearing monstrous theories about artistic subjects, for most people talked about them, and few had taken the trouble to ascertain the great truths upon which all sound theory in fine art must ultimately rest.

Photography is a most useful and curious invention, of the greatest value for the record of plain facts about persons and places, but it is not a fine art at all, and can never be made one. The nearest approach to fine art yet made by photography has been in the remarkable photographs by Mrs. Cameron which many readers will remember or possess. Mrs. Cameron defeated the obtrusiveness of photographic detail by putting her subjects out of focus, which gave them a massive breadth not unlike the gloom and obscurity of some old pictures. She was fortunate in fine models, for several of the noblest heads in England were copied in her camera. Even in this instance, however, although the result was more pleasing and harmonious than photographs usually are, the old impossibilities remained, as they must remain, unconquered.

I photographed landscape a good deal in 1859, and animals in 1865, but found that, practically, it was not worth while to continue. Photography is a great time-waster, on account of the excessive care it requires about chemicals and cleanliness; it is uncertain too, and there are many failures. A professional photographer contends more easily against these difficulties than a painter can, who only uses photography as an auxiliary. The photographer is more patient and more skilful, and he renews his chemicals more frequently. Painters have not time to struggle

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with much technical difficulty outside of their own too difficult craft.

I omitted to mention, in the course of the preceding essay, the well-known defect of the photograph by which the lens exaggerates and falsifies the perspective of objects, throwing them out of drawing. It is scarcely necessary to do more than allude to this, as everyone must have observed it in photographic portraits, where the knee or the hand of the sitter will often be out of proportion to the rest of his person.

The objections to photography from the purely artistic point of view may be summed up as follows :—

1. It is false in local colour, putting all the lights and darks of natural colouring out of tune.

2. It is false in light, not being able to make those subdivisions in the scale which are necessary to attain relative truth.

3. It is false in perspective, and consequently in the porportions of forms.

4. Its literalness, and incapacity for selection and emphasis, are antagonistic to the artistic spirit.—1873.

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V.

WORD-PAINTING AND COLOUR-PAINTING.

THE comparison between words and colours, as means for the expression of artistic ideas, has for a long time possessed a great attraction for me; and as it is a matter which very closely concerns all workers in literature and painting, I intend here to offer such results as I have been able to arrive at; so far, at least, as they may influence the practical labours of those who write or paint.

If we examine a single coat of arms, we shall at once perceive that its describableness is due entirely to artistic poverty.

"Paly wavy of six, or and azure, a lion rampant pean, on a chief gules, three crosses fleury ermine."

I have selected the most elaborate coat I can recollect. If I had chosen the most simple, as, for instance, "Argent, a bend sable," the artistic poverty would have been more evident. But a shield of fifty quarterings is infinitely poorer, artistically, than the commonest natural object, and therefore infinitely easier to describe.

For, first of all, there is no gradation in heraldry. The colours are all crude; *or*, *azure*, and *gules* merely mean gold leaf, ultramarine, and vermilion, just as they come from the colourman's.

And again, the variety in the forms is finite; it is even exceedingly limited. "Paly wavy of six"—a herald knows at once what *that* means; he has drawn it a hundred times. "A lion rampant"—the creature and its three or four attitudes are kept in stock in every heraldic mind ready for immediate

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application. And the cross fleury being a rigid, conventional form, is as easy to remember as the + in algebra.

Let us see whether we can make an equally accurate description of some similar objects in nature.

"Paly wavy or and azure." There is often wavy or and azure in sunset skies amongst the upper clouds; but, as every curve in it is full of unexpected and indescribable changes, and every hue of it is full of infinite, and most subtle, and most inexplicable gradations, how *can* words ever blazon this Divine heraldry at all? There are lions enough in Africa yet, in spite of English rifles; but no words can perfectly picture the least of their mighty movements. "Pean," "ermine," "gules," "or," and "azure!" good enough for the splendour of lordly pride; but not good enough for one wreath of perishing cloud, nor one feather in a wild duck's wing!

Now all good writers who ever lived have frankly confessed the impossibility of accurate description of natural scenery in words. Good writers scarcely ever attempt it. Their descriptions, even when most elaborate, are no more than stimulants to the reader's imagination, rather trying to make him imagine a scene for himself than vainly endeavouring to convey to him a truthful picture of something he has not seen. All word-description that goes beyond this, though it may be highly accurate and ingenious, is, so far as the reader is concerned, positively useless.

For the accurate realization of a complex word-description, even if it were possible, which it is not, would require an effort of the intellect so enormous that not one mind in a million would be capable of it, unless previously trained for years to practical landscape-painting.

Even the best word-painting of our own day, whenever it reaches a certain point of elaboration, is probably only comprehensible by devoted students of nature, and *they* always realize something else than the object described.

Word-painting of the human figure seems easier than that of landscape, because the varieties of human form are restrained within more definite limits than the varieties of mountains and clouds. But words are not capable of anything like accuracy even in figure painting. The *signalement* attached to an ordinary French passport is a kind of description where a rigidly prosaic accuracy would be really of use, and is seriously

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attempted. The object, of course, is to render the passport not transferable. But passports are transferable, notwithstanding the *signalement*, and are very frequently transferred.

As an illustration of the difficulty of conveying a true image of anybody by words, take the common case of a child who has lost its mother at birth. If no portrait of the mother exists, that child has no chance of ever getting to know what she was like. All the neighbours know; all the child's elder relations know; he is never tired of asking questions about his mother, and they answer all his questions as well as they can; but they cannot, by means of words, transfer to his brain the image of her which exists so vividly in their own; and he goes on through life, actually surrounded by a thousand truthful portraits of his mother, impressed on the brains of his friends and contemporaries, not one of which, in spite of all his ardent longing, will he ever be permitted to see.

The art of word-painting has its secrets. Its first law is brevity. It is not possible to produce, with an elaborate word-picture, that single-stroke effect which makes the power of an elaborate colour-picture. For a long word-description must first be read from beginning to end before there is any chance of a perfect image being produced by it; and then the reader must gather up and fit together all the parts of it like a child's puzzle-map—no easy matter, especially for indolent or half-interested readers. It is on this account that long word-descriptions are generally so fatiguing, and make such exhausting demands on the reader's energy.

The next secret is to attempt nothing that words are manifestly incapable of doing. It is needless to aim at accuracy. Very rude, broad, imperfect sketching is all that words are fit for. To try after imitative accuracy is a waste of time, and is certain to make the reader skip the passage, if he does not shut the book.

The object of the word-painter being to make the reader imagine a scene for himself, he must profoundly understand the capacity of ordinary people's imaginations, and take care not to go beyond it.

The commonest trick of famous and clever word-painters is to dazzle people by sounding phrases and brilliant metaphors into the belief that they have really received a very noble impression, when the whole force of the impression, if analysed,

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would be found to be due to the music of the sentences and the splendour of the metaphors, *not* to the natural scene which is the pretext for them.

Our best modern English word-painters are, amongst the poets, Tennyson, Shelley, Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and Keats, in order of excellence.

And of prose writers, Ruskin stands quite alone; then after him, but at a great distance, come about a dozen others whom it is needless to particularize.

Of all these I give to Tennyson the first place. Even Ruskin, the best prose word-painter who ever lived, says that no description of his is worth four lines of Tennyson.

Tennyson seems to me to understand the limitations of word-painting better than any other man. There is not the slightest straining after unattainable fidelities in any one of his descriptions. They go no farther than the limits of the art allow; and they are always exquisite as far as they go. This is the highest praise that can be given to any artist, because it implies his perfect conception of the boundaries of his art, and his mastery over all that lies within those boundaries.

Shelley's painting has a remarkable resemblance to Turner's, which I think no critic has hitherto pointed out. There are the same splendour, colour, and mystery; the same love of clouds and water; the same unreality and abstraction. If Shelley had given himself a pictorial instead of a literary training, and possessed the picture-making faculty, he might, if he had lived, have rivalled Turner on his own ground.

Byron's word-painting is too passionate to be in any way accurate. It owes all its power to fire of language and strength of imagery. The reader is never really moved by the scene described, but by the vivid images and allusions it calls forth from the poet.

Scott's descriptions are affectionate and often very spirited in their way, but not always artistic.[1] They are seldom pic-

[1] There is a little confusion here between what is artistic in the literary and in the pictorial sense. A literary artist will do what is most effective in literature without reference to painting. Scott's descriptions are certainly not pictorial, his mind lay quite outside of painting, but he was a good literary artist in his own way, seeing the earth rather as a place to be travelled in, and hunted over, than to be contemplated in passionate painter's ecstasies.

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torially conceived. They harmonize, however, very well with the vigorous human action of his characters. His view of nature, though he seems to have enjoyed colour, was perhaps rather that of a sportsman happy to be out in the open air than that of a student of landscape.

Keats might have made an excellent word-painter if he had lived; but I do not share Mr. Ruskin's too humble veneration for what he actually wrote. His words are often very cleverly fitted in quaint odd ways, and do, no doubt, attain a peculiar power which I dare say would be difficult to imitate, if it were desirable, which it certainly is not. Mr. Ruskin himself is, when excited, a much better writer of English than Keats, in his brief career, ever came to be.

Wordsworth knew more of natural scenery than any other writer not also a painter—knew as much, I should say, as many a professed landscape painter; but as an artist in words he attempted too much. All who know the scenery Wordsworth described, must recognize the delicate truthfulness of his descriptions. They contain evidences of observation very rare in literature; but they are without effect on readers ignorant of landscape, because they require powers of memory and imagination in the reader, which no reader who is not an observer of nature can possibly possess.

Mr. Ruskin's art of description in prose is in every way wonderful. He complained somewhere that his readers missed the arguments in his books, and dashed at the descriptions. A novel complaint truly! What author but Mr. Ruskin ever found his descriptions dangerously seductive? Other people's descriptions are skipped habitually by the prudent reader. Mr. Ruskin's, it appears, do positive injury to the graver and more argumentative parts of his writings. He is decidedly the first author who has made landscape description too attractive. And when we try to get at the reason for this attractiveness in his word-pictures, we see that it is mainly owing to an unusual magnificence of language, and a studied employment of metaphor.

George Sand has a passionate love for nature, with the intensest feeling. She understands the *expression* of landscape, and renders it with great power. Her interest in landscape seems to strengthen as she grows older, her latest novels being remarkable for their evidence of close and recent observation

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of nature. Her descriptions are thoroughly masterly and artistic, and rank very high as specimens of what may be done with words.

Of these writers I will take Tennyson, giving extracts from him only, for the limits of my space would not allow of an adequate study of the others.

And first, I am sorry to say, the Tennyson pictures are by no means numerous. There are scarcely fifty of them in all. So little faith has this prince of poet landscapists in the powers of verbal art, that he employs it very rarely and very briefly.

The first that occur are in "Mariana."

> "With blackest moss the flower-plots
> Were thickly crusted, one and all:
> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That held the peach to the garden-wall.
> The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
> Unlifted was the clinking latch;
> Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
> Upon the lonely moated grange."

Here there is no attempt at form, and little at colour. The moss is simply all described as *blackest*. This is near enough for poetry; but a painter knows that this black moss would, in nature, be full of purples and greys infinitely various. The gradations in the moss on the flower-plots are not so much as alluded to, for a volume of description would not have conveyed them to the reader's mind. The sadness and strangeness of the broken sheds may, however, be mentioned verbally, because these are mental feelings, which are the peculiar province of language. It is not the broken sheds that are in themselves sad, but their appearance excites that feeling in the poet, who conveys the feeling to his reader when he could not possibly convey the form. The extreme slightness of the description of the grange itself is equally apparent: it is lonely, and moated, and thatched, and the thatch is out of repair—no more.

Now, let us suppose that I were to select this subject for a picture; what then? As Tennyson treats it slightly in words, can I also treat the subject with equal slightness on canvas?

No. Because the art of colour-painting is so infinitely superior to the art of word-description that far more is required of it, and it *cannot* be so rude and imperfect if it

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would. For Tennyson's "blackest moss" I must set an elaborate palette of purples and greys, with perhaps one touch of real black on one of the nearer flower-plots; whereas he blackens them all alike, superlatively and indiscriminately, as if there were no such thing as gradation in the world.

And then the *forms* of the mosses? Every patch of moss *must*, in a picture, have a form of some sort; for in nature every patch of moss has an outline designed on the object it attaches itself to, which is not less delicate and elaborate than the outline of England on the sea. Tennyson, of course, takes care not to talk about the forms of the mosses; he is too much of an artist to waste his words. A poem the length of "Paradise Lost" would not describe accurately the form of the mosses on one of the flower-plots. And the plots themselves; how many were there of them? Tennyson did not count them: saw the flower-plots in the vision, but took no heed of their number. But in my picture my flower-plots must of necessity be countable, and I must decide how many I will put. No answer from the poet. But the painter cannot avoid these details. His superior power of description is accompanied by the need of larger and more accurate knowledge.

And the garden-wall, what were its height and length? Was it of brick or of stone? And the broken sheds; ruinous we see, but how large were they, how shaped, and on what side of the house were they situated? And then the most important thing of all, the grange. Not one word of architectural detail. The reader is to imagine, as he best can, a moated grange,—any old house with a ditch round it will do. Tennyson knew that the imaginative reader would make a very good moated grange for himself, and that the dull, unimaginative reader would never be able to realize the most elaborate description, so it was of no use to attempt one. But no painting could possibly be so vague. A house in a picture *must* have definite architectural forms. They cannot be dispensed with. And the painter here, as in everything else, requires hard knowledge of forms and colours, where the poet will satisfy us with a sweet sounding word.

The fourth stanza of "Mariana" contains a little detailed foreground picture in the pre-Raphaelite manner:—

> "About a stone-cast from the wall
> A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,

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And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding grey."

It would have been difficult to compress more of Nature into so confined a compass of verse: but the reader will easily see for himself that a painter would either have to invent, or to seek out in Nature, a thousand details that the poet has not given us. The shape of the sluice is not mentioned, nor its size either, and the colouring of the marish mosses is not even hinted at. The poplar was silver green, but there are some millions of poplars in France, "all silver green, with gnarled bark," so that this does not amount to a description of any particular poplar. So one might say of an Academy model, that she was "all flesh colour with a smooth skin," but that would not amount to a recognizable portrait of the individual woman. The waste was level, and the horizon rounded the landscape with grey; but every artist knows that in the flattest, dullest countries, there are no two landscapes alike, and yet this sketch is as general as that of the poplar, and is applicable to any treeless flat.

It is like the opening sketch in "The Dying Swan:"—

"The plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful grey."

But this is made rather more definite in character by the distance, which is well put in, and true in effect:—

"Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows."

And the colouring of the mosses on the water is given this time:—

"And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow."

A painter, however, would have to know *where* the purple and green and yellow were, and what proportion of the field of

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vision was occupied by each. And he would have to paint not merely *purple*, but a thousand varieties of it; not merely *green*, but infinite gradations of bluish green, yellowish green, and green much neutralized by red; not merely yellow, but delicate changes of grey and gold in the yellow. For the painter goes so infinitely beyond the writer in landscape, that the most detailed written pictures are almost as crude as heraldic blazoning in comparison with painters' work.

There are two magnificent lines in "Oriana:"—

> "When the long dun wolds are ribb'd with snow
> And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow."

It would take a painter a month to realize the first line on canvas. When snow lies in the hollows of rough land, it assumes outlines of a complexity quite infinite and exceedingly difficult to draw. It is very well for a poet to say "ribb'd," and so have done with the difficulty, just as he would say of a ship's hull in process of construction, that it was "ribb'd," using the same word for both. And it is the very word which gives so much truth and value to the two capital lines which Wordsworth made for Coleridge, and which Coleridge used in the beginning of the fourth part of the "Ancient Mariner:"—

> "And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
> As is the *ribbed* sea-sand."

The poets may use the same word for snow in mountain stream furrows, and sand corrugated by waves, but a painter could not render both with the same kind of work. In the one case, he would have to understand and declare an immense variety of facts concerning mountain anatomy, of which the poet might remain ignorant without injury to his verse, and, in the other case, a totally different order of facts concerning aqueous action on sand.

The "Lady of Shalott" opens with a charming description:—

> "On either side the river lie
> Long fields of barley and of rye,
> That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
> And thro' the field the road runs by
> To many-tower'd Camelot;
> And up and down the people go,
> Gazing where the lilies blow
> Round an island there below,
> The island of Shalott."

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"Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls and four grey towers
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott."

This is the best and most perfect word-picture we have yet come upon. Yet there is not one form in it, and only the very slightest hint of colour. The willows whiten, and the walls and towers are grey; that is all the colouring. Form there is none, except the *length* of the fields, if we allow that shapeless length is indeed form at all. We are told nothing of the height of the walls, nor of the sort of battlements upon them, nor, indeed, whether they *had* battlements. We are not even informed whether the towers were round or square. To form any idea whatever from such a description as this, it is necessary that the reader should set his own imagination vigorously to work, which, in fact, every reader does, according to his capacity, though in most instances unconsciously. When I analyse the picture that rises before me on reading these two stanzas, I find that I have little authority for it in Tennyson. It is a composition formed from memories of scenes I know, fitted together without the slightest regard for topography. For the fields I see are English, like the scenery of Kent; and the road is English; I confess to an anachronism in the road, for the one I see is most decidedly macadamized; but "many-tower'd Camelot" is, in my dream, not English at all, but an old towered town on the Rhone, opposite Avignon, with a few more towers and no modern houses. The island of Shalott is one I remember on the Yonne. And the four grey walls and four grey towers are a reminiscence of a grand old castle in Wales.

The peculiar powers and defects which distinguish word-painting from colour-painting appear to be briefly these:—

Words describe the emotions of the spectator better than the scene he sees.

They convey mental impressions, not material forms.

Colours convey material forms more accurately than mental emotions.

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Words are quite incapable of rendering form and colour in any but the very rudest way. They may, however, indicate great delicacy of perception in the person who uses them.

Colours, in skilful hands, may be made to render form and hue so very accurately, that to have seen a good topographical picture of a place is almost as good as having seen the place itself.

Words may be very vague and still quite intelligible. As, for instance, you may say "the church had a tower," without so much as specifying whether the church was built of brick or stone, in Gothic or classical architecture; whether it was large or small, old or new; whether the tower was tall or short, had a spire or not, &c. &c.

Colours, on the other hand, *must* be definite, or they would cease to be intelligible. In a coloured picture of a church the architecture must not only be stated, but worked out with some degree of detail, so that not only would the spectator be aware at once what the architecture and materials were, but he would receive an impression of a certain number of windows, &c.

Unless a word-picture is insufferably tedious, the facts conveyed by it will be very few.

A colour-picture will record innumerable facts without becoming tiresome at all.

A word-picture, if long, cannot be combined into one whole without a great intellectual effort on the part of the reader.

A colour-picture is combined into one whole by the artist, and the spectator cannot, if he would, see one part out of its relation to the other parts, whose influence it cannot escape.

Artists in words can reach more brilliant effects of light than artists in paint, because they recall the light of nature.

Artists in colour are bound down to dingy white lead.

Artists in words help themselves out by acoustic description; as, for instance, they add to the force of a storm at sea by telling of the roar of the wind, the canvas rattling like musketry, the thunder pealing, and the breakers dashing against the cliffs with a report as of cannon.

Colour art is silent.

Words may be true, because they go such a little way. It is quite true, for example, that Rouen Cathedral is a magnificent specimen of Gothic architecture.

But no picture of Rouen Cathedral ever was, or ever can be,

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so absolutely true as the above statement, because in all painting there must be innumerable little inaccuracies of detail, owing to the imperfection of human handiwork; and yet, in painting, this cannot be avoided, as in writing, by the total *omission* of detail, because in painting such omission is direct falsehood in itself.

The office of the word-painter is to get people to look at art and nature, to pierce through their dulness and indifference with earnest and powerful language.

The office of the colour-painter is to give an idea of beautiful natural scenes to people living at a distance from them.

I had not space in this essay to compare the pictorial and literary novel. I had intended to take Hogarth's "Marriage à la mode" as an example of what may be done in the pictorial novel on an elaborate scale, and Cruikshank's "Bottle" series as a pictorial tale. I should then have shown how far such works might be considered to contend with the literary novel in the delineation of character.

The subject of this essay, if developed in all its branches, might very easily be made to fill a volume. For the sake of any reader who is interested enough in the matter to pursue it for himself, I will observe briefly:

That so far as the art of painting concerns itself with *man*, as a subject, it is undoubtedly inferior, and very far inferior, to written language.

For the art of painting renders the bodily shape and so much of mind as the body expresses, but language reveals the most secret thoughts.

Considered with reference to the body alone, painting is as superior to writing as it is in landscape.

But considered as interpretations of mental character, written narratives are quite incomparably superior to any possible series of pictures.

Hogarth's famous series is as meagre, in comparison to one of Fielding's novels, as a word-picture by Tennyson to a pre-Raphaelite landscape.

We know the persons by sight, which is an advantage the novelists do not give us; but we know very little about them except their appearance.

People say that the character and history of each individual

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are written on his face, so that such pictures as Hogarth's ought to be as good a revelation of character as a novel by Thackeray.

Yet, in ordinary life, does the aspect of a man, even when combined with the chief *visible* facts of his history, open for us his inner life and mind, and his secret history? Not in the least.

And are bodily appearances easy to interpret? I know an unlucky peasant who was endowed with a great red nose by nature: he is one of the most abstemious of men, yet enjoys the reputation of being a drunkard, merely because his nose is red. If Hogarth had put him in a picture, Mr. Sala and other commentators would have moralized on the "drunkard's" nose.

To compare word-painting and linear drawing in stories of human life it is only necessary to separate Thackeray's illustrations to "Vanity Fair" from the novel itself, and compare the two. The illustrations, without the novel, would hardly, I think, convey a very full or adequate idea of the characters.

Even Doyle's illustrations to "The Newcomes," which are much better, are weak in comparison to the words they illustrate. We could not guess the history and character of the Colonel merely from the pictures of him, still less Ethel's. For the novelist has always this immense advantage over the painter, that he can make his characters utter their own sentiments, and report to us every word they used.

The men and women that painters represent are all dumb.

Again, the novelist can narrate a connected series of mental changes and circumstantial events, whose necessary development and final accomplishment may come about very gradually and slowly.

The painter, on the other hand, can only give us detached glimpses, each of one second of time.

This single-stroke effect, this concentration of the labour of months to realize the effect of a moment, and that upon a canvas which shall be comprehended at one glance,—a power which in landscape gives the painter such an immense advantage over the writer with his tiresome *consecutiveness* of detail,—happens to be just as great a disadvantage in the delineation of character, where the literary process of consecutive

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revelation, not instantaneous illumination, is the process exactly suited to the purpose.

In landscape and human physical form, nearly all the advantages lie with colour-painting.

In illustrations of human *character*, all the advantages are on the side of the writer.

For colours paint *things* best, but words convey *thoughts* best.—1860.

NOTE.

I add to this essay an observation on the art of verbal description which may concern the critical or literary reader.

A description is never worth anything when it has not peculiar features of its own, and the talent of the describer consists in perceiving these peculiar features in nature. and expressing them in well-chosen language, exactly and especially adapted to the scene described. When Fontanes travelled in the Pyrenees, he wrote to his friend Gueneau de Mussy, and tried to describe the scenery, but got no farther than *un torrent terrible, des vallées délicieuses, un spectacle ravissant.* This is not description at all, it is nothing but words. Sainte-Beuve very justly observed, in criticising this kind of writing—

"Un *spectacle ravissant*, c'est bientôt dit. Et comment et pourquoi est-il ravissant? et plus ravissant là qu'ailleurs? Vous ne nous le montrez pas, et vous seriez bien embarrassé de le faire; il y a toute une langue de formes, de couleurs, que vous ne savez pas, et quand on n'a pas la langue, on n'a pas les idées, au moins les idées bien démêlées; et dans le cas présent, on n'a pas la vision complète et distincte."

The sources of good literary description are the close observation of special characteristics, and intensity of personal feeling. But in the craft itself there is the most subtle cunning in the use of words, for their value in sound, in reminiscence, and in suggestion. —1873.

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VI.

TRANSCENDENTALISM IN PAINTING.

THE connection between the word "transcendental" as originally employed by Kant, and the same word as I employ it in the present essay, may be briefly indicated before we consider the especial subject of the essay itself.

Kant used the word to designate the class of ideas existing in the human mind independently of experience. Emerson calls all persons who rely on their own intuitions rather than on the experience of others, Transcendentalists. Transcendentalism in painting may be defined as the longing to realize artistic ideals hitherto existing only in the mind of the artist. Whether such an ideal is purely technical, as, for example, possible processes not hitherto employed; or artistic, in the restricted sense of compositions of an order for which there is no precedent; or scientific, as natural effects yet unrecorded, —the transcendental tendency is to realize the dream and aspiration of the artist's own mind, rather than simply to reproduce the results of other people's experience.

The transcendental state of mind is therefore directly opposed to the whole feeling of the ordinary practical intellect. The transcendentalist takes no interest in the merely doing over again what others have done before him, but kindles into enthusiasm with the exciting hope of realizing his own ideal. The practical man has no faith in intuitions; does not believe in the possibility of anything not yet actually done, and restricts all his action to the safe and mechanical reproduction of such ideas of other men as he has already seen embodied in material forms. The two classes of men—idealists and materialists

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—are equally necessary to mankind, though necessary in very different proportions; and neither of these two classes has any right to despise the other.

The transcendentalists think much, but usually produce little; the materialists produce much, but do not, in the strict sense, *think* at all. The transcendentalists, however, are accustomed to maintain that by mere thinking they can increase their practical skill.

Thus it is said that Ole Bull, the celebrated Norwegian violinist, arrived at his most wonderful effects less by manual practice than meditation. He practised less, and thought more, than other violinists. This is quite in keeping with his reflections after hearing Paganini. Ole Bull actually sold his last shirt to hear that mighty master, and, having heard him, instead of saying like the crowd that nothing new was possible after that, began to seek after hitherto unknown effects that even Paganini had not discovered. Both these facts indicate clearly that Ole Bull was a musical transcendentalist, and his long retirement confirms it. A true transcendentalist dislikes publicity, and loves to cultivate himself in solitude.

No man has ever reached commanding eminence without some touch of transcendentalism. Even in great conquerors this spirit lurks and works. Their discontent with the extent of their territorial dominion, and eager desire to enlarge it, correspond to a similar feeling in the philosopher with regard to the boundaries of present intelligence. Conquerors are the visible types and examples of the intellectual conquerors, and Napoleon is never so grand and commanding a figure as on the Alpine snow. Every transcendentalist thrills with pleasure when he hears of that passage of the Alps; for he also would cross the mighty barriers that bar him from the golden fields.

The English mind does not welcome the transcendental philosophy, because it prefers that sort of intellectual repose which permits the most energetic and continuous labour. Politically, the French are transcendentalists, and the English not. The most practical minds have no love for this philosophy, because they instinctively perceive it to be a great hindrance to productiveness. It is impossible to produce so long as we only dream about what we ought to produce. This philosophy cannot become habitual either in nations or indi-

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viduals without destroying productive energy. Its most salutary action is intermittent, by *epochs*. Transcendental epochs are necessary to progress, but they ought to leave us long intervals for hard, undoubting labour. Else all this fine philosophy would end in *wishing*, without the possibility of realization.

I have observed that in particular instances the abuse of this tendency of the intellect has resulted in a permanent state of intellectual lassitude and debility. It is, in fact, an abuse of the ideal, or imaginative faculty, and will naturally produce the same disastrous effects upon the mind that sensual excesses do upon the body. Habitual transcendentalists in thought are anything but transcendental in action. They surpass nobody; and by waiting all their lives long before deciding what to do, are easily distanced by persons of less imaginative power, but greater practical force. So this philosophy is at the same time useless to a man's ambition, and dangerous to it.[1] With regard to the arts, and especially that of painting, I intend here to point out the advantages of transcendentalism, and to indicate its peculiar dangers.

In all labours there are three stages—the mechanical, or imitative; the transcendental or reflective; and the *intelligently* practical. I do not say that every labourer passes through all these stages. The vast majority stop at the first; a few reach the second; still fewer attain to the third.

It is obvious that to enter upon the second phase, that of reflection, a new order of faculties is needed. Every human being possesses in a greater or less degree the faculty of imitation, or the tendency to do what he has seen other people do. But the sceptical or examining faculty, that which *looks* (*σκέπτομαι*), is rarer, and it is this power which leads men into the second or reflective phase. And, difficult as it may be to enter this transcendental region, it is yet more difficult to pass through it, out on the other side, into the third phase, the intelligently practical.

The men who remain always in the imitative stage are useful

[1] The best instance in literature, well known to the public, is that of Joubert. The class of minds to which Joubert belonged naturally and necessarily remain in most cases obscure; but by accident we get to know one of them occasionally, as we know him. See the allusion to Joubert in the *Intellectual Life*, and Mr. Matthew Arnold's Essay on him.—1873.

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to society as copyists and reproducers of other men's thoughts. The men who get on as far as the second or reflective stage, and stop short there, are of no good to anybody that I see, except as a warning, and for their continual protest against low standards of criticism, and their dissatisfaction with all imperfect and inadequate performances.[1] But persons who have reached the third phase, and are not only reflective but practical, usually achieve worthy results. They attain to the highest mark their several natures are capable of reaching. They are the best and swiftest workers. Henceforth they lose no time. Knowing the limits of art, they do not expect impossibilities. No unforeseen difficulty arrests them. Having learned from the transcendental philosophy the inadequacy of all means, and yet the exact degrees of utility and availableness of every material aid, and having lost the childish expectation of too great and too immediate results; having learned the limits of their own powers, and ascertained by reflection what objects they ought to strive for, these transcendentalists, when they *do* become practical, are the most resolutely practical of men.

In our art an intelligent critic would easily point out the transcendentalists. The Prince of them all is Leonardo. I have not at hand his *Trattato della Pittura;* but in Rio's life of him there is a passage very much to our purpose which is founded on that treatise. "Pour lui, le peintre dont les connaissances ne vont pas au-delà de son ouvrage, et qui a le malheur d'être content de lui-même, est un homme qui a manqué sa vocation; au contraire, celui qui n'est jamais satisfait de son œuvre, a toutes les chances de devenir un excellent ouvrier. Il est vrai qu'il produira peu; mais tout ce qu'il produira sera admirable et attrayant." This dissatisfaction with their own work is one of the most striking characteristics of the transcendentalists. Rio speaks elsewhere of "cet incurable mécontentement de soi-même, qui le tourmentait sans relâche et le forçait à refaire ou à retoucher vingt fois la même chose." Ludovico Dolci, in his Dialogue on Painting, re-

[1] They are often useful as critics, though the business of a critic is one of the least satisfactory, and the least understood or appreciated, that a clever man can choose or pursue. The transcendental critic maintains the banner of the Ideal, and delivers us, or does what he can to deliver us, from the slavery to small facts to which most of us are so prone.—1873.

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presents Leonardo as "a sublime genius, *always discontented with his own works.*" Again, Leonardo used to say that theory was the general, and practice the soldiers, thereby attributing a degree of importance to theory, which, though perfectly just, would never have been accorded by any merely practical person. And his strong, and in some respects unfortunate, tendency to extend the boundaries of his activity, was quite transcendental. He was always seeking new realms.[1] His French biographer thus alludes to this disposition: "Cette disposition à étendre plutôt qu'à affermir ses conquêtes intellectuelles, s'était déjà manifestée chez lui dès son enfance, et ne le quitta plus pendant le cours de sa longue carrière, à laquelle manqua toujours l'unité de but, non par l'effet d'une application superficielle, mais par *la promptitude avec laquelle des horizons nouveaux s'ouvraient à son esprit.*" This continual opening of "new horizons" is the element of general progress contained in the transcendental philosophy, yet often disqualifies the individual for signal success in his especial vocation. With respect to his artistic faculty, Rio says: "On peut dire que, seul entre tous les artistes, par la force, la hauteur

[1] The transcendentalism of Leonardo was due to the qualities of his intellect that lay outside of the artistic qualities, to the reflective and scientific part of his nature. No pure and simple *artist* ever was transcendental, but Leonardo was not all artist; if he had been, he would have painted continually as Titan did, feeling a confident pride in his work, but not reflecting about it, nor deserting it for engineering. The reason why there have been so many transcendentalists in art during the last twenty years, is because in a time of learning and thought like ours it is so exceedingly difficult to keep the artistic temper pure. That temper, in its knowledge of what words cannot express, in its ignorance of the easily-mastered information which the world considers necessary, in its strongly personal view of all things, its intense prejudices, its delight in its own gifts and doings—that temper is most difficult to maintain in its force and strength amidst the other and wholly different states of mind which prevail in an age of rationalism. Hardly anyone living can have the artist-temper in the full exuberance of its productive energy. It ought to blossom with the bloom of youth, unchecked by any criticism except the kindly help of the master or fellow-student, unchilled by any shadow of deadly doubt, and then bring forth its fruit abundantly, uninterruptedly during manhood, to fail only at last with failing hand and eye. Instead of this happy sequence, the modern artist finds himself hampered and vexed by contradictory criticisms and theories, so that he can never do anything simply and without thought. He becomes half-artist, half-thinker and philosopher, and his energy is lowered, his production hindered, his mind given over to reflection.—1873.

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et la souplesse de son génie, il s'éleva jusqu'à la synthèse de *l'idéalisme* et du *réalisme.*" He made endless preparations before beginning a serious task, "préparatifs qui avaient pour unique but de satisfaire sa conscience d'artiste." In him the transcendental period does not appear to have been limited to certain years of youth, but rather to have alternated with his practical state at irregular intervals to the very close of life. Thus, nobody could ever be sure that he would execute a commission entrusted to him, because, even when amongst his multifarious occupations, he might have found time to do it, ten to one he would just happen to be in his ideal or transcendental state, with a settled conviction that all human labour was vanity, especially his own. So it happened that his great bronze statue, that was to have been, never got beyond the clay model. Italy waited ten years while Leonardo prepared his studies for this statue. He got it at length modelled in clay, and, instead of casting it in bronze immediately, thenceforth took no farther interest in the matter, so that the casting was delayed till Ludovico could not furnish the bronze on account of the war with France. Then the French soldiers came and amused themselves with shooting at the clay model, which they found convenient as a target; and thus this great and noble work, universally recognized by the Italians, during its brief existence, as the best of its kind in Italy, was lost for ever to the world. The portrait of Mona Lisa was four years on Leonardo's easel. Vasari says: "After loitering over it for four years, he finally left it unfinished." His Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizj is unfinished. In his Last Supper, at Milan, the head of Christ was never finished, from incapacity on the part of the artist to realize his too lofty ideal. It is related that the Prior of the monastery where Leonardo painted this work "could in no way comprehend wherefore the artist should sometimes remain half a day together absorbed in thought before his work without making any progress that he could see. This seemed to him a strange waste of time, and he would fain have had him work away as he could make the men do who were digging in his garden, never laying the pencil out of his hand." The Prior complained of Leonardo's idleness to the Duke. Leonardo condescended to explain to the Duke, "that men of genius are sometimes producing most when they seem to be labouring least, their minds being

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occupied in the elucidation of their ideas, and in the completion of those conceptions to which they afterwards give form and expression with the hand." And with reference to the slow progress of the equestrian statue, Vasari says: "There is good reason to believe that the very greatness of his most exalted mind, aiming at more than could be effected, was itself an impediment; perpetually seeking to add excellence to excellence and perfection to perfection." Some Servite monks, who gave a commission to Leonardo, wishing him to get on with it, conceived the hospitable but somewhat imprudent idea of lodging him and all his household, supplying the expenses of the whole. But he kept them waiting a long time, and made no beginning. "At length, however," says Vasari, "he prepared a cartoon." Piero Soderini paid Leonardo every month whilst he worked for him, but Leonardo *did not complete the work*, and so honourably offered to return the money received. "It is related," says Vasari, "that Leonardo, having received a commission for a certain picture from Pope Leo, immediately began to distil oils and herbs for the varnish, whereupon the pontiff remarked: 'Alas the while! this man will assuredly do nothing at all, since he is thinking of the end before he has made a beginning to his work.'" There seems to have been amongst Leonardo's customers, a very general conviction that he was not to be relied upon. Vasari, in a general observation on this characteristic, gives a sufficient reason for it: "Leonardo, with his profound intelligence of art, commenced various undertakings, many of which he never completed, because it appeared to him that the hand could never give its due perfection to the object or purpose which he had in his thoughts, or beheld in his imagination." In short, he was a transcendentalist, too strongly imbued with that philosophy for sustained action, yet far from being quite paralysed by it, or we should probably never have heard of him. His habit of seeking for discoveries, even in the most ridiculous trifles, his endless longing after the unknown, and his aspirations towards unattainable perfection, are so many signs and symptoms of transcendentalism. He tells the Duke Ludovico il Mauro that the difference between himself and the other military engineers of his day is, that their warlike instruments do not differ from those in common use, whereas he has discovered secrets. It is certainly much to be regretted that

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these tendencies should have possessed Leonardo all his life. Up to thirty, he might have learned the doctrines of this exacting and imperious philosophy; but at that age he was already great enough to have left her schools. What a long life he lived! and how richly he was gifted! and what a poor, inadequate result he has left in comparison with his astonishing powers and his length of days! A faded fresco on a broken plaster wall, a few fair canvases, a treatise or two, and one short philosophical poem! He made some wonderful guesses and discoveries, and achieved a colossal fame; but so long as his immortal name shall be remembered by men, it can never be meditated on otherwise than mournfully. O splendid Leonardo! the many-sided; a narrower nature might have yielded more abundant fruit! It is enough to make one hate all transcendental philosophers to think that so mighty a genius was all but lost to art, because he would play with their most benumbing and paralysing torpedo of a philosophy.

It is odd that the realists should be more disposed to transcendentalism than what are called the idealists; but this seeming anomaly may be thus accounted for: The realist compares his work continually with nature, whereas the traditional idealist merely obeys certain prescribed rules. Leonardo, the most transcendental of painters, was so loyal to Nature as to assert that she alone was the mistress of superior intellects. And you will always find that the most intense realists in our art are the most exposed to the seductions of the transcendental philosophy, for their endless striving after nature is a perpetual discouragement, and their best success seems to them but failure.

Therefore, it is likely that this philosophy has never had so many votaries in our art as now, when the victory of the realist schools of Europe may be looked upon as at last assured. Every other young painter in England is a transcendentalist. There is small hope for those who do not pass through this phase of intellectual experience.

This does not affect the truth of what I have just stated at the beginning of this chapter respecting the *general* rarity of transcendentalists. What I said was this:—

"In all labours there are three stages—the mechanical, or imitative; the transcendental, or reflective; and the *intelligently* practical. I do not say that every labourer passes through all

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these stages. The great majority stop at the first; a few reach the second; still fewer attain to the third."

I spoke of *all* labours, not of ours alone. Now, if you take the mass of human occupations, you will find that the most part are favourable rather to the imitative than to the reflective man. In most trades reflection and discovery are superfluous, generally positively injurious to the pocket. In the manufacturing districts, where there is as much successful energy and ability as are to be found anywhere, the atmosphere is by no means favourable to transcendentalism. Cotton manufacturers with an ideal turn usually ruin themselves by the premature adoption of new, and as yet imperfect inventions, and a want of steadiness in their habits of business. If Leonardo had lived in Rochdale forty years ago, he would have contributed very excellent inventions to the cotton manufacture; but it is scarcely probable that he could ever have profitably worked a mill. And so in other active and busy trades. If you pause too much to reflect, you are ruined. In trade, invention may occasionally lead to fortune, but as a general rule mere industry is safer. This is so commonly understood by the more prudent tradesmen, that they rest contentedly in the traditional or imitative stage, leaving the poor geniuses to improve upon their instruments and machines.

But in art the conditions are entirely reversed. A painter who is a realist does not merely compare his paint with his neighbour's paint,—is not satisfied merely because he can turn out as good an article at as low a figure as the rest of his trade,—but, on the contrary, is always comparing it with appearances in Nature, which are quite other than paint, and with which all rivalry is hopeless. The bitter and discouraging lessons that this continual comparison forces upon him, are to an intelligent young painter nothing less than an elementary course of transcendental philosophy; and after learning a while in this terrible school, there is no telling what will become of him. His future fate, circumstances and his own degree of strength must determine. He will either lapse into inactivity and despair, in which case a speedy and total change of profession is the best thing to be hoped for him, or he will get through his transcendentalism as a child gets through its teething, having thereby gained new instruments for the acquisition of a stronger nourishment.

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A great deal of the present prevalence of this philosophy is due to Mr. Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites. Mr. Ruskin is almost as transcendental as Leonardo. And here let me observe, in passing, that although the transcendentalists are slow and unreliable as workmen, so that when they begin anything there is no telling whether they will ever finish it, they are yet the best and most stimulating of critics. Emerson, in his Lecture on the Transcendentalists, thus describes their critical tendency. He speaks of "the extravagant demand they make on human nature. That, indeed, constitutes a new feature in their portrait, that they are the most exacting and extortionate critics. Their quarrel with every man they meet, is not with his kind but with his degree. There is not enough of him; that is the only fault. They prolong the privilege of childhood in this wise, of doing nothing, but making immense demands on all the gladiators in the lists of action and fame." No critic ever answered so precisely to this description as Mr. Ruskin does. The immense service he has rendered to art has been by unceasing and importunate demanding. He has never enough of good things. He is possessed with so insatiable a hunger and thirst for all that is excellent in art, that a thousand artists toil from year to year without satisfying him. One might give a list of the things he has asked for, and got, and yet he is still asking. Let him ask! for to demand, and exact, and stimulate to nobler and sterner aims, are his office and mission upon earth. Mr. Brett gave him chalk hills, and he asked for the Val d'Aosta; the Val d'Aosta was accordingly mirrored for him with a marvellous fidelity, and then he wanted more of soul than the mirror gave. Once he wanted apple-blossoms, and suddenly at his word the walls of the Academy blossomed like an orchard. This drew from him the observation that the greatest men did not like flowers, so the flowers faded away from Trafalgar Square.

In Mr. Ruskin's own work the transcendental habits of Leonardo are frequently betrayed. His long and careful collecting of materials; the extent of his range, including architecture and painting as the most prominent subjects, with politics and theology and literary criticism filling up the background, occasionally to the detriment of the matter in hand; his want of method and self-direction, leading him in his best works to give us disquisitions having nothing to do with the

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subjects of the chapters where they occur; his constant study of Nature and ceaseless reference to her as the only authority; his contempt for tradition; and, as an artist, his refinement and delicacy of hand, to be acquired only by the severest self-criticism,—all these things are so many marks and symptoms by which I know him for a transcendentalist.

And the effect Mr. Ruskin has had on art may be generally described in this manner; that he has inoculated all our younger painters with more or less of his own transcendental tendencies. All the best young painters now alive in England are striving with all their might, either to paint what no one else ever painted before, or, if their subjects are old ones, to treat them more truly than they ever were treated before. Our English School is in a state of intense aspiration after hitherto unattained perfections, a state of the general mind sure to breed transcendentalists by hundreds. And so we have plenty of them of both sorts, the active and inactive.

I think as Mr. Ruskin is the best example of a critical transcendentalist I could find amongst writers on art, so Mr. Holman Hunt is the most known example of a transcendentalist in action. The whole pre-Raphaelite movement is, indeed, a result and embodiment of this philosophy. The boundless confidence of these painters in convictions which had but slight support at first beyond the limits of their own consciousness, their decisive preference of internal to external guides; their firm reliance on principles rather than persons; their courage and obstinacy in opposition; their laborious obedience to the idea which impelled them beyond the sympathies of the hour,—all these things indicate a transcendental rather than a materialistic state. But strong and gifted must that painter be who with a judgment so severe and exacting, does yet attempt to realize his conceptions in so imperfect a material as paint. To most people, when once their ideal rises to a certain height thenceforth all execution seems vanity. How many young painters have I seen in the Slough of Despond, lost in the wild hopeless dream of the transcendentalist, longing after impossible perfections! It is not so to the same extent in any other art, because no other human labour suggests comparisons so discouraging. A musician may sing to an audience which is not just fresh from a chorus of angels. A poet has to contend against no superhuman

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rivalry. Even a sculptor enters into no hopeless contest with Nature, for he does not attempt colour and light, the two unattainable things, but confines himself to form alone, which is quite accurately imitable. But the painter is always in the presence of another Painter, with whom all rivalry is hopeless; and the traveller comes to his dingy canvases with eyes still dazzled by the glitter of the glacier and the splendour of the sea.

And thus in the pictorial art transcendentalism is peculiarly fatal to productiveness. Let a young painter resolve that he will paint entire verity—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—and he may as well burn palette and brushes at once. The utmost we can hope for is to be as true as the nature of our means and materials permits,—a vast concession to falsity. But these limitations of materials are intolerable to the ardent aspirant. He sees so vividly, and feels so strongly, that he will never endure to complete any of his attempts. He feels them to be, at the best, mockeries and makeshifts. He finds it impossible to express himself in paint. He will try language, perhaps, and write poems, because the poem does not pretend to imitate, only to celebrate, the beauty of the universe. Or, if he has courage enough to stick to painting, he will push imitation to its utmost limit, like Leonardo and Hunt and Millais, to discover after all that art is less an imitation than an interpretation of nature.—1860.

NOTE.

Between the years 1850 and 1860 the younger English painters were, most of them, in the transcendental condition of which this paper attempts to give some account. The true origin of the condition was a new beginning of art, and a beginning which so far as human faculties were concerned was decidedly at the wrong end. We were all beginning art from nature; our predecessors in all ages of the world had begun art from the most independent conventionalism, gradually adding more and more of nature as their senses became more acute. To be followed industriously and

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happily art should be conceived, and has always been conceived, as a thing delightful in itself for its beautiful forms and colours, with only just so much subservience to natural law as the criticism of the spectator (that is, of the epoch) may happen to require. The temper of the happily productive artists has always been (I use the word reverently, almost religiously) a *childish* temper, pleased with its own inventions and its own successes, loving nature up to a certain point, but not painfully toiling and disquieting itself about natural phenomena. The most modern English school started, as no other school ever did before, with an intensely keen and observant insight into nature, resulting in the most anxious endeavours to render pure natural truth in paint. We therefore entirely lost the happy, playful feeling of other times when men began with their own ideas, and gradually added truth as it forced itself upon their awakening perceptions. In the matter of colour, for example, nobody before our time ever made himself miserable because his colour was not scientifically true; the elder artists were contented to have colour plausible enough to pass muster, provided only it were pleasing, and by working on this principle their taste was free to produce the most agreeable harmonies. They cared very little even for scientific accuracy in form; and though their works had form enough, in the fully-developed schools, to satisfy the eye, they forgave themselves many errors in drawing and perspective, if only the general result were fortunate as a pictorial arrangement. The elder artists gradually worked their way from the conventional Egyptian statue to the art of Phidias, or from the Gothic illuminated manuscript to the painting of Van Eyck. We tried to work our way from absolute nature, seen scientifically, to an absolutely true imitation: hence our frequent failures; hence, too, our unsatisfactory moral and mental state, so far removed from the enviable childishness and quiet undoubting industry of the pre-scientific times.

The natural development of the arts of design is from rude *human* work and primitive *human* conceptions towards higher and completer truth; and so long as men follow this course they are happy and confident, pleased with what they achieve, and rejoicing in their increase of practical force. But when they forget that art is a *human* product, and try to make it simply a reflection of the splendour and perfection of the universe, they fail inevitably, and are oppressed by the sense of failure. Then comes the terrible Nemesis, the doubt of the value of all that man can do, the dis-

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belief in humanity, in its capacities and sentiments, the vague aspiration after the absolutely, unquestionably *true*. This state of mind, the transcendental state, is fatal to production in the fine arts, which are in their essence *human* before all things. An artist ought to believe in himself even more than in the external world, to believe in his own preferences and passions more than in the absolute truth, to rely upon an inward rather than an exterior law. Only in this self-confident temper can he work happily and productively. If he loses this strong central personality to diffuse himself in outer nature, like a gas in the immensity of the atmosphere, it is not life he gains, but death. Nature lives on, afterwards, eternally, but art and the artist are absorbed in her infinity.—1873.

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VII.

THE LAW OF PROGRESS IN ART.

THE course of artistic or other discovery appears to be very much the same as the succession of processes followed by an artist in the construction of a certain picture, only that in the great field of human progress the work is accomplished by the *race*, and taken up successively at its different stages by relays of innumerable workers. The construction of a picture is usually effected very much as follows. First a rude charcoal sketch to get things in their places and to indicate the division of the future labour. This first sketch is rude to such a degree that persons not conversant with art would not know what was meant by it, most of the curves being represented by angles and straight lines even by the best figure-painters; but however rude, it is useful as a marking out of boundaries. Then comes a careful outline of the principal of these boundaries; that is, the line enclosing the great masses. Then within these lines the dead colour is roughly laid—roughly, though with consummate foresight. After that comes a second painting in detail, then a third in still minuter detail, and, with some men, even a fourth, fifth, and sixth, of detail within detail, film over film, till the work has reached the highest excellence possible to the painter.

Now, the history of human art in its great relations to the whole race is merely the repetition of this process on a vast scale, extending its minor processes through ages, and employing, not merely the fingers of one workman, but of all the best workmen in the world, generation after generation.

First the great Father of the art comes and traces out the

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charcoal sketch. He has time only to do this roughly, and then die. Another generation carries the work on by a more accurate division and definition of the boundaries of future labour. A third begins to fill these boundaries. A fourth goes over the whole ground again, but this time in detail. A fifth traverses it all over again, but with far minuter detail; and after this the only work for the race is this continual going over and over again the whole field of labour traced out and partly prepared by their forefathers, but every time with more accurate discrimination in the detail.

The same order of progress is visible in maritime discovery, in the geography of the land, in the progress of agriculture, and in the advance of every science.

In maritime discovery you will find this law of progress constant from the voyage of Columbus to that of the last New York clipper. When Columbus crossed the Atlantic, the first rude sketch was made. To-day thousands of sea-captains are hard at work on the details. The credit of originating this great system of observation is due to the United States. More than a thousand of her navigators "were engaged," says Maury, "day and night, and in all parts of the ocean, in making and recording observations according to a uniform plan, and in furthering this attempt to increase our knowledge as to the winds and currents of the sea, and other phenomena that relate to its navigation and physical geography." And now all the great European nations co-operate in this plan, so that the ocean is covered with observers.

In the geography of the land we see a steady tendency towards accuracy in maps. If we take Great Britain alone as an example, we shall observe that the improvement from the earliest known maps to the Ordnance survey is not in extent of ground, but in accuracy of detail. The wonderful advance from the first rude sketch of the island to the present minute survey of every square yard of it, is a perfect type of all human progress, which consists far less in the conquest of new realms —for this is only possible in the very earliest stage of progress —than in the increasing accuracy with which realms long since conquered by our forefathers are gradually made known to us.

In the progress of agriculture we find another equally instructive example. It is always tending to a culture less and

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less superficial, or "skimming," as they call it in America, and more and more thorough. The progress of agriculture does not consist in the enlargement of kingdoms. The new generation occupies the old ground, but carries its culture to a more detailed perfection.

In the advance of other sciences the same course is followed. First comes a man of large grasp, who lays down the rough charcoal outline of the new science; then two or three take it up and define his outline better, correcting it where faultiest. Some time afterwards you will find ten thousand labourers filling up the minutest details of the discovery. The history of photography from the days of Niépce to the present time is the most striking illustration I remember. The original problem has scarcely been enlarged, but how minutely has it been worked out! Human anatomy and physiology have followed the same law. The first problem was *Man*, and the problem of to-day is still Man; but within this narrow envelope, our skin, how much has been explored and learned, how much yet remains for future investigation!

In the history of our art of landscape-painting, Turner, our Columbus, did not supersede, but prepare our work. We are, in relation to him, as observant sea-captains to a great maritime discoverer. We go over the same waters, and we add the results of our lives of observation to his great hints and strivings after truth. In the broad facts he saw and proved, our evidence confirms his, but we have still much to explore in which his charts cannot help us.

What is known as the pre-Raphaelite movement in painting resembles the system of maritime observations instituted by the United States. The sea had been traversed before by innumerable navigators, but the time had at last arrived when a more accurate and perfect knowledge of it was felt to be desirable. It was all to be examined over again, therefore, on a system infinitely more exacting and more severe than had ever been applied to it before. And in art, though Titian had painted figures and Turner landscapes, it was felt by our younger painters that the time was ripe for a new investigation of Nature's *aspects*, both in man and earth; but this new investigation must be conducted with a resolute adherence to truth, and an accurate recording (in colours) of artistic observations. So we are going over the whole ground again like

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the modern sea-captains with their charts and note-books. And it is probable that we shall surpass our predecessors in accuracy, because this is a quality which increases with the progress of science. But as to our surpassing them in creative genius, that is quite another matter, depending entirely on individual capacity. For the painter is a compound of poet and man of science, and it does not follow that the poetic half of him will develop itself with the same rapidity as the scientific half. The probability seems even to lie a little the other way; it is difficult to conceive any order of quite accurate landscape as purely poetical as the fairest Turnerian dreams.

I thus associate artistic progress with scientific, because the art of painting is strictly a compound of two sciences, with a poetic infusion from the mind of the artist. The sciences are, first, the great science of natural aspects, an infinite ocean of discovery which ten thousand discoverers might traverse for ever without exhausting; and, secondly, the technical science of colour. These sciences follow precisely the same law of progress as all other sciences, though the element of human feeling may remain much the same in different generations of men. Painting, however, develops itself very unequally, because one of its component sciences may be quite stationary, whilst another is in rapid progress. Thus in the Renaissance schools, generally, the science of the human figure progressed with astonishing vigour, whilst that of landscape gained little ground. The science of colour, more limited and technical than that of natural aspects, reached an early and splendid maturity in Titian; nevertheless the moderns have added to it several valuable processes, unknown to Titian, yet absolutely necessary for the accurate rendering of many truths they desire to express, which did not come within the range of Titian's art. In all this, painting is exactly on the same footing with other sciences; the highest element in it, the *soul* of its master-works, being always, in every age, a matter of individual genius. The progressive element in art is the scientific element, not the poetic; but it must not be forgotten that the scientific portion of any work of pictorial art is a very large portion of it—is, in short, the whole body of it; that the feeling of the artist infuses the spiritual element only, and has nothing to do with matters of scientific fact.

We are neither to underrate nor to exaggerate the importance

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of the science of natural aspects, but we are to understand that, like all other sciences, it is essentially progressive, and we are to accept its progress as a matter of course. Artists will not be any the more famous for being scientific, but they are compelled to become so because they have embraced a profession which includes a natural science, just as the profession of medicine does. What I desire to enforce is the great truth that *within* the Art of Painting there exists, flourishes, and advances, a noble and glorious SCIENCE—a science as great as geology, or astronomy, or chemistry—a science, like them, based entirely on nature, and which is essentially and irresistibly progressive.

Whether, in its mighty progress, this great science will forward the poetic part of the art, I know not; but it will undoubtedly furnish continually new subjects for noble thought, and new excitement to the enthusiasm of the student. Without this stimulus of progress, the art would become conventionalized and sink into a manufacture, as it always has done when religious authority or national customs have arrested its scientific advance. I therefore believe that the very greatest of all dangers to our art, if not the only danger to it, is the stoppage of its scientific development: in other words, its abandonment of the pursuit of truth. So long as all Nature is open to art, there surely cannot lack the necessary excitement for the poetic temperament in the artist.

And as I perceive now around me all the signs of intense scientific activity in contemporary artists; as they ransack all the realms of nature for new facts, and are incessantly recording on canvas truths which were never before recorded for the human race, I feel unlimited hope and confidence in the future. The apprehension of the approaching extinction of the art of painting, expressed by Constable and others, appears to me just as reasonable and well founded as the apprehension of the approaching extinction of geography.—1860.

NOTE.

This little essay states very truly the progressive nature of that part of the art of painting which depends upon the knowledge of natural facts, but it does not bring sufficiently into relief the still

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greater importance of technical excellence in painting, and the curiously unprogressive nature of the art in this respect. The distinction between the two may be made clearer by an example. Claude knew much less about sky and water than our ordinary young landscape-painters of the present day, yet he painted better what he attempted (of sky and water) than they do. Everyone who is acquainted with technical matters in the fine arts is aware that the *quietly perfect* art of oil-painting is extinct, or nearly so, and that in its place we have a great variety of extremely clever and dexterous substitutes, resulting in skilful, partial expressions of artistic beauty, but not reaching that calm divine harmony of aim and method which we find in Titian and Giorgione, and even in such work as that of Velasquez. The greatest painting of past times had one quality which no modern one really possesses—it had *tranquillity*. The moderns fly in the empyrean as if on wings of Dædalus, in an anxious, agitated manner, feeling always as if they were making perilous experiments and likely to catch a fall. The truly consummate artists did their wonderful feats surely and quietly, like eagles sailing on the wing.

In the year 1860, like the whole of the artistic school I belonged to, I attached too much importance to the positive science of natural aspects, and not enough importance to the technical art of painting. Our English nature is not spontaneously artistic, we only arrive at the understanding of art by intellectual processes, and we are all of us, both artists and public, much more literary than artistic in our habitual mental operations. This is why we were all so ready to go in search of natural truth and so unready to attain the finest pictorial quality, which, though not *quite* independent of natural truth, is bound to it very loosely. If these two things are husband and wife, the marriage between them is one of those marriages which permit each of the two parties to go alone whenever it seems to be more convenient. A thorough *artist* always gives just as much truth as suits his purpose, and no more, but we Englishmen, with our national honesty and veracity, became much more enthusiastic about truth to nature than we had ever been about pictorial artifices and qualities. The result was visible in our works, which contained many natural facts that had never been painted before; but, unfortunately, from our neglect of *art* we painted them so crudely that it might perhaps have been just as well not to record them at all. I see now, however, with the greatest pleasure, that the younger men do not seem to be working

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with that over-strained anxiety for new and minute truth which hindered us from reaching harmony. They are content to paint what is already perfectly well known, but they try to paint it simply and harmoniously. It is right, assuredly, that the whole realm of nature should be open to the artist, but things are never painted really well just when they are first freshly discovered. Immediately after the discovery of scientific perspective, the artists made their pictures hideous with it, and many modern pictures have been made hideous by our own discoveries. After some years the novel material attracts no particular attention, and then it falls into its right place and gets just the relative degree of prominence that it deserves.

And now, if I try to say in a few words what, after the experience of the schools of Europe during the last twelve years, seem to be the prospects of art in the way of any possible progress, I may express the hope that the greater schools are settling down quietly to try for better technical work, and for more perfect harmony. What artists most feel themselves to need is a quiet completeness of pictorial expression resembling that of the great old masters, but including modern discovery in due subordination to the highest artistic purposes. The modern scientific impetus has done its work. It has added immensely to the range of art, especially in landscape; and now, as its active force no longer operates, the artists are free to devote themselves wholly to artistic aims. But the artists of the future must be content to equal, if they can, the masters of the past. The Loire rises three times in a generation, but only to a level it has attained before; and so the river of art, ever flowing, may lift itself again and again, but not above the mark the old Italians left. The men of science are like the coral insects in the sea; they build on the work of their predecessors and rise ever higher and higher, but the artist is like a wave whose crest can never lift itself more than a fixed height above the sea-level, a height that has been attained before by the waves that have passed away.—1873.

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VIII.

ARTISTS IN FICTION.

"If a man applies himself to *servile* or mechanic employments, his industry in those things is a proof of his inattention to nobler studies. *No young man of noble birth or liberal sentiments, from seeing the Jupiter at Pisa, would desire to be Phidias, or from the sight of the Juno at Argos to be Polycletus.*" So says old Plutarch; and we may therefore argue from this passage alone, if other proofs were wanting, that the artist was, in his time, socially considered, a despised person. The secret of Plutarch's contempt for Phidias lies in the word *servile.* He respected *government* and not *servitude.* He liked the rough virtues, often in reality very great vices, which lead men to power, and he had an honest contempt for such mean genius as that of Phidias and Polycletus, which exercised itself in the service of mankind.

Most people are of Plutarch's opinion; he only gave a frank expression to one of the fundamental instincts of humanity. The thermometer does not more accurately indicate the precise degree of caloric present in any fluid, than the popular respect the degree of governmental power present at any given epoch in any one class of society. Its indications are quite reliable. Men respect only *power.* They detect the exact amount of it present in any class of their contemporaries with an instinct which is absolutely infallible, and in strict proportion to the amount of power present is the degree of deference yielded.

And accordingly, if we study the social position of the artist, we shall find it slippery, unsatisfactory, and insecure. Goethe observes somewhere, that though the artist is a privileged

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person, and though his talent has an inward certainty, its outward relation is peculiarly uncertain. One can easily fancy that the position of a great Greek sculptor in a society holding Plutarch's notions must have been inferior. And since, as I said before, the world generally is quite of Plutarch's opinion, the modern successors of Phidias, whether in sculpture or other fine arts, find a frank and equal intercourse with the general world next to impossible for them.

The best and truest pictures of contemporary manners are, undoubtedly, to be found in what the French call "studies of manners," or those modern novels in which the society of to-day is painted from the life. Let us see how the painter's relation to this society is sketched by one or two of the ablest hands.[1]

In "The Newcomes," when young Clive devotes himself to painting, it is considered a family disgrace by his friends, whose place in society, by the way, is of quite recent acquisition, and whose origin is so low that they are all forced to tell lies about it. But Clive is not on the road to power, and, of course, without power, gets no consideration from the governing classes. His occupation withdraws him from the society of gentlemen, and we find him, not at university wine-parties with young lords, but working at Gandish's with a set of low flatterers for his associates, and the son of a domestic servant for his most intimate friend. That reverend puppy, Charles Honeyman, the perfect incarnation of all that the weakest women most deeply love and reverence, says with bland dignity, "My dear Clive, there are degrees in society which we must respect. You surely cannot think of being a professional artist. Such a profession is very well for your *protégé*—but for you . . ." when Clive vehemently interrupts him. Mrs. Hobson Newcome tells the Colonel that his boy is not good enough to associate with hers, because "he lives with artists and all sorts of eccentric people," whereas hers "are bred on quite a different plan. Hobson will succeed his father in the bank, and dear Samuel," she trusts, "will go into the Church." The father of these hopeful young gentlemen calls Clive's devotion to art "this madcap freak of turning painter." "Confound it,"

[1] Part of what follows is abridged from a review article contributed by myself to the *West of Scotland Magazine and Review*, and entitled "Artist-Life in Fiction."

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says he, "why doesn't my brother set him up in some respectable business? I ain't proud; I have not married an earl's daughter . . . but a painter! hang it, a painter's no trade at all—I don't fancy seeing one of our family sticking up pictures for sale. I don't like it, Barnes;" and two minutes afterwards he heartily damns "all literary men, all artists, the whole lot of them!" The said Barnes agrees pleasantly with his uncle, and farther on in the book speaks of his cousin Clive as "a beggarly painter, an impudent snob, an infernal young puppy," and so forth. Even Clive's father did not seriously believe that his son would live by painting pictures, but considered him as a young prince who chose to amuse himself with painting. Mr. Barnes mentions at home "a singular whim of Colonel Newcome, who can give his son twelve or fifteen hundred a year, and make an artist of him." Ethel writes to the Colonel from Baden, "You will order Clive not to sell his pictures, won't you? I know it is not wrong, but your son might look higher than to be an artist. It is a rise for Mr. Ridley, but a fall for him. An artist, an organist, a pianist, all these are very good people; but, you know, not '*de notre monde*,' and Clive ought to belong to it."[1] Mrs. Mackenzie, when Clive in his adversity tries to support the house by his labour, says, "It is most advisable that Clive should earn some money by that horrid profession he has chosen to adopt—trade I call it." And Thackeray himself says, "The Muse of Painting is a lady, whose social position is not altogether recognized with us as yet. The polite world permits a gentleman to amuse himself with her, but to take her for better or for worse! forsake all other chances and cleave unto her! to assume her name! many a respectable person would be as much shocked at the notion, as if his son had married an opera-dancer. However, it never entered into Clive's head to be ashamed of the profession he had chosen; and though he saw many of his schoolfellows in the world, these entering into the army, others talking

[1] Ethel's reasoning here is feminine. She confounds together persons of creative and of merely interpretative power. They ought to be clearly separated, thus:—

CREATORS.	INTERPRETERS.
Poets.	Translators.
Original Painters.	Engravers and Copyists.
Musical Composers.	Musical Performers.

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with delight of college and its pleasures or studies, yet, having made up his mind that art was his calling, he refused to quit her for any other mistress, and plied his easel very stoutly."

But Thackeray is too profound a student of human nature not to let this continual opposition have its natural effect in the end. The fact is, our affections must be very deeply engaged in a pursuit to enable us to follow it steadily against the opinion of all around us; and Clive, not being a born painter like J. J., but only a lad of good abilities (not of genius in any wise), having the choice of war with his father and his wife, or the virtual abandonment of his art, does as most of us would under similar circumstances,—pursues the art by stealth with just sufficient ardour to make his wife jealous of it, but not half enough ardour for success in it. So he is miserable (being in a false position), and J. J. feelingly laments for his friend: "Among them they have taken him away from his art. They don't understand him when he talks about it, they despise him for pursuing it. Why should I wonder at that? my parents despised it too, and my father was not a grand gentleman like the Colonel." Ultimately, when restored to prosperity by his marriage with Ethel, Clive shaves his beard, and abandons his art. The moral of the story is thus admirably completed.

This J. J. Ridley, the true artist, is only the son of a domestic servant. Thackeray could not have made him the son of a gentleman, because the obstacles placed by society in the path of a man of genius of sufficient worldly rank to bring him within its influence are nearly insurmountable, and all the terrible difficulties of poverty and ignorance are as nothing in comparison with the one difficulty of facing social degradation. Gentlemen are the born officers of the social army, and they do not like to have their epaulettes torn off. But men in the ranks may do the menial work of the world, because their position is so humble already that it cannot well suffer by any act not absolutely criminal. So the butler's boy may paint pictures as he might have brushed boots, and nobody considers it a degradation, except his parents, who probably had higher views for their son, and would have liked to see him in livery.

The other professional artists, to whom Mr. Thackeray introduces us, are not men who would naturally take a strong position amongst gentlemen. Gandish, the martyr to "Igh

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Art," tells Smee, the portrait-painter, the secret history of a grand work. "The models of the hancient Britons in that pictur alone cost me thirty pound—when I was a struggling man, and had just married my Betsy here. You reckonise Boadishia, Colonel, with the Roman 'elmet, cuirass, and javeling of the period—all studied from the hantique, sir, the glorious hantique." Again, with what a wonderful command of all the resources of our language does the same eloquent artist discourse to Colonel Newcome on his illustrations of English History. "If you do me the honour to walk into the Hatrium, you'll remark my great pictures also from English 'istory. An English historical painter, sir, should be employed chiefly in English 'istory. That's what I would have done. Why ain't there temples for us where the people might read their history at a glance without knowing how to read? Why is my Alfred 'anging up in this 'all? Because there is no patronage for a man who devotes himself to Igh Art. You know the anecdote, Colonel. King Alfred flying from the Danes took refuge in a neaterd's 'ut. The rustic's wife told him to bake a cake, and the fugitive sovering sat down to his ignoble task, and, forgetting it in the cares of state, let the cake burn, on which the woman struck him. The moment chose is when she is lifting her 'and to deliver the blow. The king receives it with majesty, mingled with meekness. In the background the door of the 'ut is open, letting in the royal officers to announce the Danes are defeated. The daylight breaks in at the aperture, signifying the dawning of 'Ope. That story, sir, which I found in my researches in 'istory, has since become so popular, sir, that hundreds of artists have painted it,—hundreds! I, who discovered the legend, have my picture—here!" In a country where the due aspiration of the letter *h* is considered the indispensable qualification of every one claiming the rank of gentleman, I do not see how Mr. Gandish could ever expect to be recognized as one.

It is observable that, whenever Mr. Thackeray has anything to say of the artistic class, it is always to leave a strong impression on the reader's mind of the artist's social nonentity. The memory of Becky Sharp's father, for instance, is never recalled in a manner favourable to him, his drunkenness or his poverty being the characteristics by one or other of which he is roughly hauled before the reader from time to time. In "The New-

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comes" the only supportable artist is J. J. Ridley; but in an aristocratic country like this, people don't particularly affect the society of their domestics or their families, and it is therefore a considerable obstacle to Mr. Ridley's social success that his father is a butler. Gandish is an ignorant old goose, and Smee one of the meanest of toadies. Clive Newcome is not an artist at all; but if, by courtesy, we count him as one, his idleness and infirmity of purpose were no credit to that profession which his swell manners adorned. In the character sketches the essay entitled "The Artists" does not contain one single portrait agreeable enough to make one wish to know the original; and by continually exhibiting poverty and meanness on the one hand, or a base and unworthy success on the other, as the opposite poles of the artistic career, the writer easily conveys the impression that the career is in itself inevitably degrading. But this, as I happen to know, was not Mr. Thackeray's own private opinion at all. As an individual, Thackeray loved and reverenced our art to a degree that no one would believe possible who knew no more about him than is to be gathered from his published works. It is as a satirist only that he laughs at the brotherhood of the brush, and the brethren of that order are no worse off than any order of men of whom that satirist treats. Without, therefore, complaining in any way of this rough usage, we have only to note with regard to Thackeray's works, considered as a collection of studies from life, taken by one who scorns the artifice of flattery, that the artists occupy in them much the same position, relatively to the rest of the world, that they do in real life; that is to say, a very unsound and unsatisfactory position.

In "St. Ronan's Well" the guests at the *table d'hôte* cannot believe Tyrrell to be a professional artist, simply because his manners are good.

"I doubt, too, if he is a professional artist," said Lady Binks. "If so, he is of the very highest class, for I have seldom seen a better-bred man."

"There are very well-bred artists," said Lady Penelope; "it is the profession of a gentleman."

"Certainly," answered Lady Binks, "but the poorer class have often to struggle with poverty and dependence. In general society they are like commercial people in presence of their customers, and that is a difficult part to sustain. And so you

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see them of all sorts—shy and reserved, when they are conscious of merit—petulant and whimsical by way of showing their independence—intrusive in order to appear easy—and sometimes obsequious and fawning when they chance to be of a mean spirit. But you seldom see them quite at their ease, and therefore I hold this Mr. Tyrrell to be either an artist of the first class, raised completely above the necessity and degradation of patronage, or else to be no professional artist at all."

There is an exquisite touch in the fifth chapter, which I cannot omit, though a little out of place. Lady Penelope, when Tyrrell avows his artistic character, "had to recede," says Scott —and mark this, for it is thoroughly masterly and characteristic —"from the respectful and easy footing on which he had contrived to place himself, to one which might express patronage on her own part and dependence on Tyrrell's, and this could not be done in a moment." Sir Walter Scott knew nothing of painting, but observed closely whatever might indicate the social estimate of art. Sir Walter never once penetrated beyond the surface of the artistic nature, and, though a great artist himself in his work, was merely a dilettant in feeling. Still, even to him, who had no sympathy whatever with painters, it was plain enough that society, even in his day, did not treat them on terms of equality.

As Scott, in "St. Ronan's Well," and Thackeray, in "The Newcomes," have illustrated our subject, so has Charles Dickens in "Little Dorrit." "Mr. Henry Gowan, inheriting from his father, the commissioner, that very questionable help in life, a very small independence, had been difficult to settle. At last he had declared that he would become a painter; partly because he had always had an idle knack that way, and partly to grieve the souls of the Barnacles in chief who had not provided for him. So it came to pass, that several distinguished ladies had been frightfully shocked." And of all the shocked ladies, Gowan's mother was shocked the most. She says to Clennam, "Perhaps you have heard that I have suffered the keenest distress of mind from Henry's having taken to a pursuit which—well!" shrugging her shoulders, "a very respectable pursuit, I dare say, and some artists are, as artists, quite superior persons; still, we never yet in our family have gone beyond an amateur, and it is a pardonable weakness to feel a little——" Here Mrs. Gowan sighed.

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A very clever and not unfair statement of the causes for the peculiar jealousy with which the rich trading class regards cultivated persons, and, above all, persons artistically cultivated, is put into the mouth of an intelligent man of business by Miss Jewsbury, in her masterly novel, "The Half-Sisters,"—a novel, by the way, which enters better into the true artist feeling than any other I know. I have never seen the question so skilfully handled; in the few sentences I shall quote, considerations are taken into account which would altogether escape any ordinary observer. The statement that authors and artists have "no professional or business-like habits" is not true, as Mr. Smiles proved in his "Self-help;" but it is perfectly well placed, dramatically, in the mouth of a man of business, being a prejudice common to his class. It is Mr. Bryant who speaks first, a great master-miner.

"Professional people live in a world of their own; and it is very undesirable that they should be introduced into the private circles of the middle classes. . . . I have a singular objection to meeting with authors, actors, artists, or professional people of any sort, except in the peculiar exercise of their vocation, which I am willing to pay for. There may be respectable people amongst them, but they are not sufficient to give a colouring to the class; and as a class, there is a want of stamina about them: they have no precision or business-like habits, the absence of which leaves an opening for faults with very ugly names; and persons whose profession it is to amuse others and make themselves pleasing, cannot, in the nature of things, expect to take a very high position. Men cannot feel reverence or respect for those who aspire to amuse them!"

"Well!" cried Conrad, laughing, "I have always observed that heavy, sententious, stupid persons seem to entertain a species of contempt for those who possess the lighter gifts of being entertaining; but I never heard it made into a theory before. To leave that part of the question, however, let me ask you whether you consider that the province of those who profess the fine arts is only to amuse? Do you think that they have gained the real end of their labour when they are paid for what they do? and do you consider the production of works of art to be a mere mode of earning a living?"

"This is an industrial country," said Bryant; "the great mass of sympathy and intellect take a practical direction—a

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direction that we can understand; we have no real knowledge of art, no real instinct or genuine aspiration after it; and I should say, that in our hearts we do not respect, love, or honour fine art in any of its manifestations, as we do that which is scientific or practical. To the Italians, to the French even, music and pictures are necessaries of life; to us English they only take the guise of ornament or convenience—of superfluity, in short. That being the case, we naturally do not feel drawn to the society of artists; we have nothing in common with them—we do not admire them; neither do we feel disposed to introduce to the society of our wives and daughters a parcel of actors, artists, musicians, and so forth, who have no stake in society, who have little to lose, whose capital is all invested in themselves and their two hands, and who have, therefore, naturally cultivated themselves far beyond what we practical men have had a chance of doing, and are capable of throwing us into the shade in our own houses, whilst they show that they despise us. Let them keep their places, and let us keep ours!"

"But do you allow nothing for the civilizing influence of men of cultivated intellect amongst you?" said Conrad.

"Railroads will do more," replied Bryant; "every people must work out its civilization in its own way. Love of the fine arts is *not* our specialty: we do not know a good thing from a bad one unless we are told; and the pretence we make about it has a bad effect on our character."

An impression prevails in England that artists have a better position in France. This is partly true, and partly a mistake. From what I have seen, personally, across the Channel, I should say that the position of a painter in France, as compared with his position here, is, on the whole, very little better, except after fame is won, and then I grant that no place in Europe is pleasanter for an artist than Paris, if his art be of a kind that the Parisians can understand. I remember two lines in *L'Honneur et l'Argent*, which indicate very well the position of a *great* artist in France; but I also remember a good many other passages, in that and other books, which indicate with equal clearness the national contempt for the artistic aspirant, or even for the consummate workman whose power has not as yet obtained public recognition. The two lines I shall quote first are spoken by a charming young French lady, excited to enthusiasm by a disinterested and honourable action:—

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"C'est plus qu'un grand artiste, et plus qu'un grand seigneur,
Plus qu'un homme opulent ; c'est un homme d'honneur."

Now it certainly would never occur to an English girl who happened to be seeking for superlatives of human greatness by comparison with which to exalt a man she admired—it would occur, I say, to no English girl to put a great artist and a great nobleman side by side as examples of the highest human dignities, and I consider these lines therefore valuable on account of their peculiarly French view of the matter.

In the first act of *La Fiammina*, too, by Mario Uchard, there is a charming conversation between a father and his son, which gives an agreeable idea of the successful artist's life. The father, "Daniel Lambert," is a celebrated painter ; the son, a young poet. It is to be regretted, by the way, that M. Uchard should have selected that particular name for his great artist, it being already the property of a celebrity great in quite another sense. Henri, the son, says to his father :—

"Tu es le premier peintre du temps ; grâce à toi je suis riche, ton nom est un talisman pour moi, il me souffle du bonheur comme au temps des fées ; toutes les portes s'ouvrent devant lui : 'C'est le fils de Daniel Lambert,' dit on sur mon passage, et l'on te fête en moi ; je suis ton clair de lune, je te reflète."

DANIEL.

Mais tu as bien tes rayons à toi.

HENRI.

Rayons d'emprunt . . . Je me sens bien humble devant cette considération qui me vient toute de toi, et me reduit à rien. Quand on dit, par exemple, "C'est Lambert le fils," il me semble que ce mot de fils est placé là comme une sentinelle qui crie : "Halte-là ! ne confondez pas : celui-ci n'est pas le célèbre."

It is also observable that when Lord Dudley, a distinguished English "patron," comes to see Lambert, his manner is anything but patronizing. Lambert, for reasons I cannot stop to explain, declines the commission Lord Dudley has come to offer, requesting him to pardon the refusal. On this his lordship answers :—

"Je ne saurais vous en vouloir, monsieur ; je venais en solliciteur, et je n'ai pas perdu ma journée, puisque j'ai eu l'honneur de vous voir."

Which is all very civil and polite.

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In the third act Henri challenges Lord Dudley, and in the course of their conversation I find an expression which we have met with elsewhere. Henri says, page 85 :—

Je pourrais avoir recours à un de ces outrages publics qui ferment toute retraite, mais entre gens de notre monde, un tel éclat ferait rechercher la cause de mon agression, et c'est ce que je veux éviter à tout prix.

The expression "de notre monde," is what I allude to. We have already met with it in a letter addressed by Miss Ethel Newcome to her uncle the Colonel, in which she says that artists are *not "de notre monde."* The coincidence is curious Here we have the son of a French artist talking to a rich English lord as if he considered himself in every way his lordship's equal. He is, however, not merely the son of a painter, but of a very famous one, which, in France, is quite as good as a patent of nobility. Yet, when I have granted that celebrated artists are respected at Paris, I cannot admit that the great body of painters get more consideration there than they do here, or that true art is better loved for itself by our neighbours than by us.

The destruction of the old French noblesse has, as everybody knows, given a character to French society which makes it less than ever like our own. There are, however, some country towns in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire where a new society, in default of hereditary leaders of ancient descent, accepts for its chief class an aristocracy of recent origin and precarious tenure, based on the fluctuating revenues of commerce. The spirit of speculation in money matters, which is strong enough in these towns to cause great vicissitudes in families, is yet more powerful at Paris, and there is not a place in Europe where the effects of money may be better studied than there. Accordingly much labour and ability have been devoted by several eminent French writers, to the analysis of money power in its relation to life in all its forms—to artistic life amongst the rest. What the modern financial aristocracy of France thinks of artists we will try to gather from Ponsard and others. Balzac and Edmond About will tell us what the vulgar *bourgeoisie* think. As for what the old noblesse thought on the subject, that is quite simple, and need not detain us; it looked on all artists as handicraftsmen, and therefore contemptible.

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Since the days of Horace the world has regarded with suspicion the praises of critics who have just plentifully feasted at a poet's table, and Horace's satire is no less applicable to the case of painters. Dilettants are, however, much more likely than artists to become the victims of these post-prandial eulogies, partly, perhaps, because artists do not give so many dinners as dilettants, but mainly because true artists cannot bear to hear themselves praised by ignorant "*connoisseurs*" (who are always icily indifferent to the peculiar excellencies of individual artists, and who, when they praise, cause the keenest suffering their feebleness is capable of inflicting), and wise painters therefore most carefully avoid showing their work to miscellaneous company. But you can never dine with a thorough dilettant without having to look at his sketches. The first scene in that immortal comedy of Ponsard, "*L'Honneur et l'Argent*," is of this familiar kind. Alas, how many times have we not all passed through similar ordeals!

The best bit here is what the statesman says:—

"It's pretty and good. I believe you paint very well. But leave all that, George, to those who have nothing. A poor hungry devil without a half-penny may daub well or ill a few canvases to get his living,—I don't blame him for it,—though he might, in my opinion, find a better use for a piece of good canvas. But *you*, rich and honoured, whom people seek after and are delighted to receive,—we must put other projects into *your* head."

The reader will perceive that this bears a wonderful resemblance to what Clive Newcome's friends used to say to him. It sounds like Mr. Honeyman, though that divine would scarcely have put the matter so forcibly as the statesman does. Why art should only be pursued by penniless persons I do not clearly see; on the contrary, artists seldom do anything great until they cease to be penniless, and art is, of all professions, the one where private fortune is most desirable and useful. The views of the statesman, however, and indeed of the majority of men who think themselves and their doings of much importance to the world, may be more nakedly expressed thus: "Painting is a foolish and trifling occupation, which, like standing on one's head in the street for chance half-pence, may yet be pardoned in a man who is compelled to degrade himself by sheer hunger; but in a man of fortune, to whom

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all careers are open, the choice of such a low trade is unpardonable." I believe this to be a very just and exaggerated statement of the opinion of society on this question, both here and on the Continent.

You may sometimes change the colour of a conversation by dropping the word "painter" into it, just as suddenly as a chemist will change the colour of a fluid by dropping something into it from another phial. I have done it sometimes for amusement, and seen lively people become reserved, and courteous people stiff, with a rapidity quite magical. So the authors of "Les Faux Bonshommes" are quite right in putting the two little words *avec dédain* for the actor's guidance.

PÉPONET

Il est peintre.

VERTILLAC, *avec dédain.*

Ah!

Then later in the same conversation, after Péponet has disclosed the name of his intended son-in-law, and Vertillac has sworn that Octave shall not have a penny of his, poor Péponet cries out,—

Oh! mais voilà qui change terriblement les choses!

VERTILLAC.

Pourquoi? puisque vous croyez à l'avenir de monsieur Octave?

PÉPONET.

Un avenir d'artiste! . . . Je suis votre serviteur!

You see Péponet has no great faith in an artist's expectations when his rich uncle abandons him. So Péponet breaks off Octave's marriage with poor Emmeline, and Mademoiselle Eugénie is not sorry.

"C'est égal, ma sœur n'ira pas en omnibus."

Such is the young lady's prudent reflection on this circumstance.

Octave, however, marries Emmeline after all, at last, and succeeds in his art, and gets the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Then he has no further need of the services of Monsieur Vertillac; so of course Vertillac comes and reconciles himself with his nephew. As a true man of the world,

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he could do no less. The first rule in the world's ethics is to remember the fortunate and successful, and to treat them with tenderness.

In Balzac's "Ménage de Garçon" we find as a marked characteristic of the people we meet, a characteristic to which Balzac frequently draws our attention himself, that they cannot understand a painter, and that they do not respect him. Joseph's own mother even, the object of his continual filial love and solicitude, cannot consider him anything else than a disgrace to her, and the crimes of her elder son weaken her affection less than the innocent pursuits of this. She and her friend Madame Descoings think of art "only as a trade." Philip himself despises and affects to patronize Joseph. When Joseph goes to Issoudun, the people there cannot make him out at all, and dislike him extremely. Hochon sneers at his art. Joseph's mother presents him to these friends with a tone and manner which imply how little she loves him or respects his calling. Rouget tells him he may have the pictures "if they can be of any use to him in his trade." Balzac, I fear, is no more encouraging than Thackeray; at the same time, Balzac shows how he himself loves artists, by describing the artistic nature with such tenderness and kind feeling. The character of Joseph Bridau is one of the purest and noblest in French fiction. Simple, generous, affectionate, a good son, a forgiving brother, an unselfish and high-principled man of genius, he is no unworthy ideal of the artistic nature. So in the "Newcomes," poor J. J. is the gentlest, the humblest, and the most inoffensive creature in the whole book. Very little is said of him, but every time he is mentioned you see that in that little pale and deformed lad dwells a heavenly soul; and Thackeray never rises into such pure strains of eloquence, never so willingly lays aside his lancet of satire, as when he speaks of the butler's boy. In all others, even in the good colonel, he has follies to ridicule or cloaked sins to reveal; but this guileless and meek heart is too holy for dissection. "Whenever you found him he seemed watchful and serene, his modest virgin lamp always lighted and trim. No gusts of passion extinguished it, no hopeless wandering in the darkness afterwards led him astray. Wayfarers in the world, we meet now and then with such purity, and hush while it passes on."

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Painters ought to feel grateful to these two great novelists, for, however faithfully they have described the world's contempt for the painter, they have with equal clearness courageously disclaimed all participation in it. There is, indeed, and must ever be, strong sympathy between true artists, though in different realms of art; and some who work in words, like Balzac and Thackeray, can comprehend and esteem, and also, it appears, even respect, others who express themselves by the less generally understood medium of colours.

M. Edmond About, in the clever "Mariages de Paris," gives us the history of a successful young painter who wants to marry the daughter of a rich *bourgeois*. The property of the girl's father consisting in building lots, the story is entitled "*Terrains à vendre.*"

After a long speech from the painter to his intended father-in-law, in which, as is the wont of young gentlemen with similar views, he temptingly dwells on the hopeful state of affairs, he pauses for once to take breath, and then adds:

"'Je ne sais, monsieur, si je me suis fait comprendre. . . .'

"'Oui, monsieur,' répondit M. Gaillard, 'et, tout artiste que vous êtes, vous m'avez l'air d'un bien honnête homme.'

"Henri Tourneur rougit jusqu'au blanc des yeux.

"'Excusez-moi,' reprit vivement le bonhomme; 'je ne veux pas dire de mal des artistes: je ne les connais pas. Je voulais simplement vous faire entendre que vous raisonnez comme un homme d'ordre, un employé, un négociant, un notaire, et que vous ne professez point la morale cavalière des gens de votre état. Du reste, vous êtes fort bien de votre personne, et je crois que vous plairiez à ma fille si elle vous voyait souvent. Elle a toujours eu un goût prononcé pour la peinture, la musique, la broderie et tous ces petits talents de société.'" A little farther on, he says, "Vous me dites que vous gagnez des montagnes d'or, et je vous crois, bien qu'il me semble assez extraordinaire qu'un seul homme puisse fabriquer pour quatre-vingt mille francs de tableaux en dix-huit mois."

This is all very good, especially the sentence where the *bourgeois* says that his daughter has always had a strong taste for painting, and music, and embroidery, and all those little "*talents de société.*"

The individualism of art is its greatest social drawback,

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because it deprives artists of a certain ground of sympathy with a disciplined society. Military life, being organized and disciplined, trains men for society, which has also an organization and a discipline; whereas, art develops those qualities most which society likes least,—qualities, indeed, which have a decided tendency to unfit men for society.

Again, this individualism is, socially, weakness. So long as the world endures, the men who can band themselves together will be stronger and more respected than those who cannot cohere. Priests laugh at independent thinkers, and call them a rope of sand: the Cardinals will ever bully a lonely Galileo. Every ensign is protected by the proud will of a hundred legions. The inventor is utterly unsupported, till he has made himself famous, and gathered round him a private body-guard of determined defenders. It is by association that classes of men compel respect, but alas for the original man who can find no associates!

And this, though generally true of all branches of our art, is pre-eminently so of landscape. There have been great schools of the figure, such as those of Raphael and Rubens, where a train of pupils and imitators followed the great master as courtiers follow a Prince, but the chief of landscape-painters was the loneliest of men. Landscape-painting has hitherto been the most unsocial of all professions. I know of no employment to be compared to it, in this respect, but that of watching in a lighthouse. Yet even these watchers are appointed by *threes* to trim the lamps in those stormy towers; but the painter watches the waves alone. For his art is singularly isolating by the very conditions of success in it. It loves desert places; its truest votaries are pilgrims, and vagabonds, and mountain anchorites. I can understand that, to persons whose degree of culture does not permit them to read his motives, a true student of nature must appear a very sulky eremite indeed. A few, perhaps, may understand that although the studies of the landscape-painter lead him into solitude, his heart is still human, and that if he has few companions, it is rather because they do not relish his hard fare, than that his tents are without hospitality, and his tabernacle closed to the friendly guest.

On looking back upon all I have said in this essay on the subject of the relation of painters to society, I think it very

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probable that the reader may have wondered ere this whether *anybody* is to be found so eccentric as to respect these pariahs. Yes, a few such persons are to be found—they even form a class, though a small one, and every member of this little body is recognizable in an instant by a true artist. The class, I repeat, is a small one—so small, as scarcely to have an appreciable influence in general society, though I hope that it may one day have influence even there.

And who belong to this exceptional class?

All who comprehend art, or can feel its power; and these only.

This rule is universal. I have *never* met with a person who knew good work from bad, and did not profoundly respect all true artists. People generally pretend to separate their (affected) love of art from their (sincere) contempt for the artist; but no such separation of sentiment is possible, and all that this ever means is, that the love of art which such people profess is hypocrisy, whilst their scorn of the artist is all sincerity. True lovers of art of course feel no respect for false or incapable workmen; but we are not considering here any question having reference to the capacity of individual workmen, and the reader will remember that, at the very outset, we began with Plutarch's contempt for Phidias, who, so far from being false or incapable, was the chief of Greek artists and one of the greatest of all time. But this rule is infallible that, *whoever comprehends art respects all true artists, and whoever despises a true artist is sure to be ignorant of art.*

In all good fiction, those persons who are represented as holding painters in contempt are also of necessity represented as being at the same time ignorant of art. Thus Thackeray says of Honeyman: "But Honeyman knew no more of the subject, than a deaf and dumb man knows of music. He could talk the art cant very glibly, and had a set of Morghens and Madonnas as became a clergyman and a man of taste; but he saw not with eyes such as those wherewith Heaven had endowed the humble little butler's boy, to whom splendours of Nature were revealed, to vulgar sights invisible, and beauties manifest in forms, colours, shadows of common objects, where most of the world saw only what was dull, and gross, and familiar."

It is necessary to have read "The Newcomes" attentively to have a definite idea of Colonel Newcome's views as to art

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and artists. He is very civil and courteous to Gandish and Smee, and lets his son be an artist without opposition. Still, Colonel Newcome would not have been exactly the "gentleman" he is intended to be, had he seriously ranked art along with other manly pursuits. He belongs to the large class, who, without despising artists as necessarily base or ignoble, treat them kindly and consider them very good people, but frivolous, and occupied, not in a very mean pursuit, but in a trifling one. It is obvious that, with such views, Colonel Newcome would be kind, in a somewhat condescending way, to our friends Gandish and Smee, and would even allow his son full liberty to pursue his art, *as an amusement*, which was the light in which the Colonel always regarded it. But when the Colonel's great banking speculation is at its height, and Clive still tries to pursue his art, the Colonel cannot see without bitterness that this boyish pastime of painting interferes with the serious duties of Clive's position as the son of a speculator. It is a vexation to the Colonel when Clive goes to his painting-room, puts on his old velvet jacket, and works with his palette and brushes. "Palettes and brushes! Could he not give up those toys when he was called to a much higher station in the world?"

This gentlemanly degree of contempt for art and its professors, which however is by no means excessive, not being either haughty or insolent, or even unkind, is yet thus severely accounted for by the satirist:—

"The world enters into the artist's studio, and *scornfully* bids him a price for his genius, or *makes dull pretence to admire it.* What know you of his art? *You cannot read the alphabet of that sacred book, good old Thomas Newcome!* What can you tell of its glories, joys, secrets, consolations?"

The reader will observe in the words I have italicised a strong confirmation of my argument that *scorn* of the artist is never accompanied by real admiration for his art, only by a *dull pretence* at admiration. Thackeray cannot help reiterating this great truth; and in this passage it is stated in as direct a manner as a novelist usually employs.

There is a striking paragraph in "Modern Painters," in which Mr. Ruskin expresses some of the feelings in which *he* looks on the great masterpieces. This is the way Colonel Newcome looked at them:—

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"But what was all this rapture about a snuffy brown picture called Titian, this delight in three flabby nymphs by Rubens, and so forth? As for the vaunted antique, and the Elgin Marbles—it might be that that battered torso was a miracle, and that broken-nosed bust a perfect beauty. He tried and tried to see what they were. He went away privily, and worked at the National Gallery with a catalogue; and passed hours in the Museum before the ancient statues, desperately praying to comprehend them, and puzzled before them, as he remembered he was puzzled before the Greek rudiments as a child, when he cried over *ὁ καὶ ἡ ἀληθής, καὶ τὸ ἀληθές.*"

And so Colonel Newcome's contempt for the pursuit of art is quite satisfactorily accounted for.

In like manner Balzac makes Rouget ignorant of the value of his own pictures, and indicates how little Philippe Bridau knew of the matter, by making him steal a *copy*, mistaking it for the original. But it is Agatha, the mother, whose ignorance is most dwelt upon, even in the last touching scenes, justly, and with profound artistic truth; for her contempt for art is one of her most strongly marked characteristics throughout the book. So, on her very death-bed, when she repents of her conduct to Joseph, he says to her, "Est-ce que tu n'es pas la douce et l'indulgente compagne de ma vie misérable? *Tu ne comprends pas la peinture? . . . Eh! mais ça ne se donne pas.*" And later, one evening, looking at a picture, she exclaims aloud, "*Oh, comme je voudrais savoir ce que c'est que la couleur!*"

Nor have the novelists failed to enforce the other half of the argument. Just as the ignorant people always despise artists, so the better informed ones respect them. Colonel Newcome and Honeyman may despise poor J. J., but Clive Newcome does not; for Thackeray, having represented him as naturally alive to art, and as also possessing some acquired knowledge of the subject, could never have made him despise a true artist like J. J., notwithstanding his humble birth. Clive writes in a letter: "Our friend J. J., very different to myself in so many respects, *so superior in all*," &c.; and afterwards, speaking to Pendennis of his father and his wife, he says: "But they neither understand me, don't you see? The Colonel can't help thinking I am a degraded being, because I am fond of painting. Still, dear old boy, he patronizes Ridley; a man of

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genius, whom these sentries ought to salute, by Jove, sir, when he passes. Ridley patronized by an old officer of Indian dragoons, a little bit of a Rosey, and a fellow who is not fit to lay his palette for him! I want sometimes to ask J. J.'s pardon after the Colonel has been talking to him in his confounded condescending way, uttering some awful bosh about the fine arts. Rosey follows him, and trips round J. J.'s studio, and pretends to admire, and says, 'How soft, how sweet;' recalling some of mamma-in-law's dreadful expressions, which make me shudder when I hear them."

And so we come back to our theory of respect. It is power, always POWER that commands the respect of men; for power is always respected when it is recognized. When people, guilty of no evident crime, do not happen to be respected, it may mean, either that they have no power, or that their power is as yet unrecognized. And the power of artists is of so subtle a nature, that very few indeed can ever detect its presence, far less be appalled and awe-stricken by its manifestations.

NOTE.

The preceding paper appeared in the previous editions of this work, under a different title, "The Painter in his relation to Society." It is here considerably abridged, not from any desire to withdraw what may have offended some critics in the paper as it originally stood, but because the rapid progress of liberal ideas makes it no longer necessary to occupy many pages in fighting against one of the most stupid and narrow-minded prejudices of our barbarian and Philistine classes.

Mr. Ruskin, in his evidence before a Parliamentary Commission in 1863, recognized the existence of this prejudice as frankly as Thackeray did. Here are two of the questions addressed to him, with his answers, which are worth quoting at full length.

"5092. Have you any reason to observe, or to make yourself acquainted with the working of the schools of the Royal Academy? —Yes, I have observed it. I have not made myself acquainted with the actual methods of teaching at present in use, but I know the general effect upon the art of the country.

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"5093. What should you say was that effect?—Nearly nugatory; exceedingly painful in this respect, that the teaching of the Academy separates, as the whole idea of the country separates, the notion of art-education from other education; and when you have made that one fundamental mistake, all others follow. You teach a young man to manage his chalk, and his brush—not always that—but having done that you suppose you have made a painter of him; whereas to educate a painter is the same thing as to educate a clergyman or a physician—you must give him a liberal education primarily, and that must be connected with the kind of learning peculiarly fit for his profession. That error is partly owing to *our excessively vulgar, and excessively shallow, English idea that the artist's profession is not, and cannot be, a liberal one.* We respect a physician, and call him a gentleman, because he can give us a purge and clean out our stomachs; *but we do not call an artist a gentleman, whom we expect to invent for us the face of Christ.* When we have made that primary mistake, all other mistakes in education are trivial in comparison. The very notion of an Art Academy should be, a body of teachers of the youth who are to be the guides of the nation through its senses; and that is a very important means of guiding it. We have done a good deal through dinners, but we may some day do a good deal more through pictures."

The change in public opinion on this subject is merely a part of a much vaster change which in the whole of Western Europe is steadily breaking down the barriers of caste. It would be unphilosophical to condemn the caste idea, as altogether noxious. It appears to be necessary to society at a certain stage, when it helps the organization of great masses by dividing them in a definite way into distinct sections, each of which can lead a more perfect and harmonious class-life than would be possible for it without such isolation. For the English gentry to act together powerfully as a coherent body, it was above all things necessary that their class should be very sharply defined, and so they had to "draw a line somewhere," according to the common phrase. Being as a class profoundly ignorant of the nature of art, and having remarkably little natural vocation for it in their own persons, they inevitably excluded artists. A certain injustice resulted which I will endeavour to explain as accurately as I may be able. Simply to be excluded from the rank of gentlemen is not in itself a grievance, or would only be felt as such in those exceptional cases where a youth of

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good family was led by his instincts to embrace a profession which involved the sacrifice of caste, and even in cases of this kind the sacrifice would be made with full knowledge of its consequences and a hope of compensation in the following of a beloved pursuit. The real grievance in the treatment of art and artists by English society was that an utterly false and degrading notion of the occupation itself was the notion fashionably received. The fashionable world did not say, "Art is one of the forms in which high culture manifests itself, and yet it is necessary, nevertheless, to exclude artists from our own caste;" it said, "Proficiency in that merely manual trade is an evidence of the neglect of nobler studies," the assumption being that the fashionable world (which in reality was not devoted to culture at all, but to amusement) did itself pursue those nobler studies with the effect of elevating its mind into regions unattainable by the craftsmen that it scorned. "I think," said Mr. Ruskin before the Royal Commission, "if you educate our upper classes to take more interest in art, which implies, of course, to know something about it, they might be most efficient members of the Academy; but if you leave them, as you leave them now, to the education which they get at Oxford and Cambridge, and give them *the sort of scorn which all the teaching there tends to give, for art and artists*, the less they have to do with an Academy of Art the better." This word "scorn" is a strong word, and yet it is strictly accurate. The prevalent public feeling (not the feeling of the few who were better informed, as a consequence of personal tastes) was really and truly one of "scorn for art and artists." Wordsworth's sonnet on illustrated books and newspapers is a good example of the sort of feeling which prevailed even amongst people who really had culture, though it was exclusively literary. They seem to have looked upon graphic art as at once useless and childish.

"Now prose and verse, sunk into disrepute,
Must lacquey a dumb Art that best can suit
The taste of this once-intellectual land.
A backward movement surely have we here,
From manhood—back to childhood; for the age—
Back towards caverned life's first rude career.
Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!
Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear
Nothing? Heaven keep us from a lower stage!"

Wordsworth did not even perceive the lower utility of drawing in giving accurate information, whilst he was entirely incapable of

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perceiving its higher uses in the embodiment of poetical ideas. It has always been one of the characteristics of classes to be able to perceive truth and poetry quite accurately and delicately in the forms which the class approves, and to be at the same time entirely blind to them in forms not consecrated or accepted by the class. The educated Cambridge men of Wordsworth's day saw truth and beauty in literature because their caste-feeling admitted literary culture, but they could be as blind to truth and beauty in art as if they had possessed no culture whatever.

Art is merely one of the vehicles in which genius and culture express themselves; and as the barriers of caste give way, it will be perceived that painting and writing are equally voices of the intellect and emotions, and by their nature equally worthy to be employed by the most refined and perfect gentlemen. The objection to selling pictures (for it is by selling a picture that a gentleman forfeits caste) will cease along with the objection to all commerce which was a part of the caste-sentiment of the age we are rapidly leaving behind us. I long for the day when a gentleman of ancient family may have many honest trades to choose from without being rudely disclassed and severed from the traditions of his race. Still more do I long for that more distant day when men will no longer be ranked according to the occupations that they ostensibly follow, but by their personal qualities and character. It is *there* that you must look for the signs of the true gentleman; and it is a pleasure to reflect that not only the art of painting but many humbler arts are quite compatible with the preservation of high character, and even with the attainment of a degree of general culture at least equal to that usually possessed by the proud and idle persons who despise them. I saw in the newspaper the other day that Mr. Odger was treated with great superciliousness by an English Justice for being a shoemaker, or for venturing in that humble calling to have any political opinions of his own. Now I am not going to enter into any examination of Mr. Odger's politics or culture, but I will say that it is in the strictest sense of the word impertinent to refer in that tone to the work he lives by. Mr. Odger's shoe-making is his private affair, and a perfectly honourable way of earning his living, and we ought to be able to consider his other accomplishments and qualities, whatever they may be, without any prejudice against him on account of the way he wins his bread. We ought not to settle in our own minds beforehand that a man cannot be a gentleman because we are aware that he follows some

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calling that it pleases us to despise; but we ought to estimate his qualities for themselves, independently of his calling, as we should do if we met him on a steamboat in ignorance of his private affairs. Now if you apply this rule to artists, not allowing your knowledge of their business to affect your judgment one way or the other, you will find that many artists are not gentlemen at all, but cads, snobs, *voyous*, or by whatever other name the uncivilized European may be more accurately designated; but you will also find that other artists, and their number is proportionately on the increase, are as perfect and true gentlemen as any in all England. There is nothing in the pursuit of art incompatible with that ideal, for the aims of art are accuracy of knowledge, delicacy of feeling, and the world's emancipation from vulgarity. Art may possibly be—is very likely to be—above us; it can never be beneath us. You may aspire to art, and your aspiration may be unrewarded; you can never condescend to art.—1873.

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IX.

PICTURE BUYING.

A TRUTH bitter to all men who live by the exercise of their talents is the supremacy of money over talent, and the power of mere gold to enslave the finest and most delicate intelligences. It is useless to endeavour to evade or deny this fact, and the position of talent in the world would be sounder if its real relation to capital were thoroughly and universally understood. Why not admit frankly, if the fact is indeed so, that the purse is the master and the brain the slave? Our philosophy ought to be able to face any fact, however unpleasant.

The simple truth is, that capital is the nurse and governess of the arts, not always a very wise or judicious nurse, but an exceedingly powerful one. And in the relation of money to art, the man who has money will rule the man who has art, unless the artist has money enough to enable him to resist the money of the buyer. For money alone is powerful enough to resist money, and starving men are weak.

But for capital to support the fine arts, it must be abundant —there must be superfluity. The senses will first be gratified to the full before the wants of the intellect awaken. Plenty of good meat and drink is the first desire of the young capitalist; then he must satisfy the ardours of the chase. One or two generations will be happy with these primitive enjoyments of eating and slaying; but a day will come when the descendant and heir of these will awake into life with larger wants. He will take to reading in a book, he will covet the possession of a picture; and unless there are plenty of such men as he in a country, there is but a poor chance there for the fine arts.

The desire for art being one of our higher appetites, and

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the desire for *noble* art the very highest of them all, it is of late development, and feeble in its first manifestations; according to the well-known law, that the successive development of human desires is also progressive—that is, from lower desires to higher.

The first desire for art appears to be always for portraiture, and generally portraiture of *self* and self's wife. Certainly there is no subject in the world more interesting to a man than himself, unless it be his wife; but these two subjects may not always be quite so delightful to all the acquaintances of the happy pair, especially considering that they can look at the originals, if their eyes desire that satisfaction. The love of portrait is a vulgar form of egotism so long as it is confined to conjugal canvases which are so frequently to be seen in this domestic country, hanging in stately gilt frames, over highly polished mahogany sideboards. But when this love of portrait extends itself to one's friends it becomes more respectable, and it speaks well for a man's capacity for friendship if he has a little gallery of those he loves best. "Little," I say, and advisedly; for one narrow room would probably contain the images of all who care for us, yet how precious will those images be when Death shall have done his work! And the portraits of those whom we have not seen, yet who are our companions in thought, or our teachers by their example, may also be deservedly precious to us if procurable. A man would follow his profession none the worse in a cabinet surrounded with the likenesses of those who had most ennobled it. How could a painter suffer himself to be unworthily discouraged by the difficulties of his art, if the faces of Reynolds and Velasquez were looking down upon him in their victorious calm?

The desire for family portraits is supplied in our day by photography, with one very happy result—the necessary diminution in scale. The offensiveness of the old conjugal daubs was not merely in the execution, but the impertinent importance of the size. Why should a worthy citizen require thirty square feet of canvas for the exhibition of himself? Would not a more modest area suffice? Photography has settled this question by the miniature sizes of photographic portraits. But where is the necessity for hanging these photographs about chimney-pieces, in little gilt frames? They are quite ineffective as room decoration, and valueless as art. Pray let them

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be printed always on paper from collodion negatives, and then kept in an album.

The first sign of a love of art great enough to go beyond portraits is the purchase of engravings. The subjects of these engravings, when the purchasers select for themselves, indicate their tastes in the clearest manner. There are religious prints, sporting prints, and licentious prints; prints theatrical, prints military, prints ecclesiastical. Engravings sell enormously in England, and are provided for all classes and all tastes. But these engravings are not so much bought from a love of art as from a feeling of interest in the subjects they illustrate. Thus, when I go into a house where there is a pretty engraving of surpliced choristers, with an inscription in red letters underneath —probably a scrap of Latin—I know that the master of the house, or its mistress, is a Puseyite; but when I behold John Knox thundering from his pulpit, I suspect that the head of the family has a leaning to the Low Church. But I do not infer that either cares for art. And if you penetrate to the private chambers of young bachelors, like Mr. Harry Foker, you will find prints of a more objectionable character, indicating a taste for fine female ankles and well-developed busts. Yet in all this there is no interest in art.

Still, even when some care for art *does* really awaken, engravings are always better appreciated than pictures. This for many reasons. The child likes bright *colours*, and the perfectly cultivated man likes good *colouring;* but to the man whose culture is just beginning, colour is a great trouble and embarrassment: he does not really enjoy it, and is very glad to be rid of it, always preferring, in his private soul, an engraving from a picture, to the picture itself. Thus, Turner's works are popular in the engravings, and have been widely disseminated by engravers; but the originals are *not* popular, nor ever can be. And independently of the question of colour, the mechanical workmanship of a skilful engraver always appears more wonderful to ignorant observers than the handling of the greatest painters, because the intentional roughness of loaded colour, or any powerful impasto, looks like daubing and bad execution to them; whereas in a print this is not possible, and the skilled cutting of the lines has a delicacy of a kind more obvious than the most delicate application of a colour film. The great Duke of Wellington was in this stage all his life; so that any reader who happens to

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be there too may console himself with the reflection that he is in very good company.

But let no one flatter himself that his preference of engravings to pictures is the result of a refined appreciation of *form*, because, however exquisite in their execution, engravings from first-rate pictures are generally very far inferior to the originals, even if judged with reference to form only. All good engravers know the infinite difficulty of perfect copyism in their art; and the thorough mastery of the burin is so rare, that the majority of our popular prints are not to be relied upon for form at all. The designs on wood furnished to our wood engravers are habitually cut to pieces by all but the very best men, and even these are only to be trusted when they do every stroke with their own hands, and do not employ unskilful assistants.

Barbarous Orientals enjoy good colour, and can produce it in their arts. But erudition and the conceit it fosters seem deadly to this instinct, for hitherto the most erudite epochs have coloured the most vilely. Latin and Greek, and classical architecture, and academic rules killed colour in France; but Decamps, and Troyon, and Breton recovered the faculty in the fields. For its perfect exercise sound health is needed, and not too much poring over books, nor yet too deep an immersion in affairs. Very few people *can* have the faculty in its full strength, because so few have any opportunities for exercising it. There is no colour to be seen in our modern towns, and not very much of it in our ordinary English rural landscape under its usual aspects.[1] In the Highlands you have it in abundance, and may enjoy it all the year round; but those deep purples slashed with emerald green, those wonderful silvery greys, that depth of glowing gold, those scarlet clouds of sunset, those rosy heights of snow, and coloured flames of the bright northern aurora,—such things are not visible day by day to every citizen of London or Manchester. And so the sense of colour languishes from sheer want of its natural nutriment, and the houses of our rich middle class are covered outside with white stucco instead of coloured marbles, and

[1] Linnell's works show how much colour *may* be found in common English landscape; but it needs to be watched for, because its grandest colour effects are rare. The usual appearance of English landscape is better seen in Constable's green and grey than in Linnell's purple and gold.

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hung within with works of art in which black printers' ink is the only pigment used. And as colour is banished from these houses, so it is entirely banished from the festive costume of the men who live in them; so that a party of English gentlemen after dinner form as colourless a picture as you could find anywhere out of a coal-pit. White and black are not colour at all, though both very valuable to a colourist; and if ever the capacity to enjoy colour shall be given to our descendants, one of the first signs of it will be their rejection of our black and white ideal of festive costume. Why should we all go into mourning every time we go to feast with our friends? Is it because we all know beforehand that the dinner is going to be a dull and melancholy business, for which the most mournful possible costume is the most becoming and appropriate? What an incongruous sight it is to see a dozen jolly Englishmen at a festive board, dressed precisely as if they had just been to a funeral and hung up their crape hatbands in the hall! Let any artist imagine what would become of the Marriage Feast at Cana, in the Louvre, if the gentlemen present were all to be dressed in black swallow-tails, with white cravats!

The effect of this indifference to colour as it concerns our art is an indifference to painting because painting is especially the art of colour. And the recognition of that art in any country depends, primarily, on the delicacy of the sense of colour in that country. Now, there is no nation in Europe at the present day of which it can be truly said that it possesses the colour faculty in a national way; some exceptional individuals possess it in each nation, just as some may possess the poetic gift. And so picture buying is an exceptional direction of expenditure; whereas, if the sense of colour were as generally acute as the sense of taste, it would be as universal amongst all who could afford it as wine buying is with us.

When this sense of colour begins to awaken, people begin to want pictures, but for a long time they believe in *copies*, and, in their private opinion, think them quite as good as the original works of great men. They cannot as yet distinguish between good and bad colour, and are very easily satisfied, anything like elaborate or subtle colouring being an offence to them. I saw a little girl learning French phrases one day, and had the

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curiosity to open her book, when I came upon a conversation about pictures, supposed to take place in some continental gallery, and which supplied young ladies with the necessary critical observations to be generally applied to pictures in galleries. Amongst them, of course, I found the following: "Those colours are too lively, they should have been subdued;" that being the stock observation of a whole class of people in the earliest stages of connoisseurship. Provided the hues be confined to brown and grey, they are considered right and safe by this class of incipient judges, when anything like Nature's brilliance of various colour is rejected by them on system as glaring and false.[1] This class of young beginners in picture buying supports a class of artists of its own, consisting mainly of copyists and brown conventionalists, but never including a colourist.

These lovers of brown art are naturally victimized by false old masters, which have the irresistible charm of plenty of thick brown varnish. Considering the extreme difficulty of estimating the value of works by the old masters, and the wildly artificial prices they fetch, it appears rather a melancholy necessity in nature that the most inexperienced picture buyers should throw themselves the most readily into a path so certain to be ruinously expensive, and so spotted with all manner of pitfalls laid by the most accomplished and scientific swindlers. Nothing is easier than to buy the works of living painters; you go to their own studios, you see them personally, you have ascertained the

[1] Something may be said, however, in favour of these uneducated persons. The uneducated eye and the perfectly educated eye agree in their dislike of raw and crude colouring; but when an Englishman has studied painting practically for a few years, yet has not reached artistic maturity, he sees raw and crude colour in nature under the belief that he sees splendid and pure colour. A half-trained sensitiveness to colour, in our English race, always seems to land us in the condition of mediæval illuminators. A Frenchman begins always with mud and clay, and gradually (if he has the right faculty) comes to perceive delicate colour gleaming in soft gradations through the mud and clay, till finally he clears away the mud and is a colourist. An Englishman begins by colouring, like a child, with violent primaries and secondaries I do not think, now, that the vulgar are so far wrong as I used to think them. They are certainly nearer to the feeling of cultivated painters than artists in the crude student-stage, when the colour-faculty is neither simply healthy nor yet cultivated, but only irritated and inflamed.—1873.

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current prices of their works, and you give them commissions, having settled the three questions of size, and price, and subject. There is little chance of your being deceived, every work so commissioned is quite sure to be authentic, and the painter's regard for his own reputation is your guarantee that he will do his best. The work is delivered to you new and sound, no tricks have been played with it, no clearing away of delicate glazes, no repainting by other hands, no brown varnishing to hide the crudity of bad colour. At any rate you see what you buy, and are not deceived. But when you lay out money in old masters, no such certainty is possible. You cannot refer to the painter himself, for he has been in his grave for centuries. And even if you were sure of their being genuine, the works of dead masters are, when worth having at all, so costly that private persons can scarcely afford to contend for them. Their prices are now out of all proportion to their merits, and merely represent the competition that exists for them amongst the great personages and Governments of Europe. The Soult Murillo in the Louvre, for which the French Government gave twenty-four thousand six hundred and twelve pounds, does most assuredly not contain as much good painting as you could get from our best living colourists for the same sum. It is not an honour to the art, nor any proof of a genuine interest and delight in it, when people show themselves so ostentatiously indifferent to the variety of its teaching and its pleasures that they would rather waste a fortune on a single canvas by an old master than buy thirty equally noble masterpieces by modern ones.

Whilst reflecting on this great subject, the buying of genuine old masters at artificial prices, and false old masters at swindlers' figures, I remember a novel that I read in my boat one day during the summer, when the breeze was faint, and she was gliding idly on Loch Awe.

In this story, which is entitled "Cinq cent mille francs de rente," there is a banker, M. Picard, who gets rich and buys false old masters, and is lamentably fleeced and swindled. The novelist, Dr. Véron, moralizes a little on the subject. I will quote a paragraph or two, which especially suit my purpose :—

"On poussait Picard vers l'école italienne.

"Dieu sait de combien de faux Raphaël, de faux Véronèse,

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de faux Titien, de faux Corrége, de faux Léonard de Vinci, l'Europe tout entière est encombrée !

"C'est surtout avec les grandes écoles d'Italie que se fait sur une vaste échelle l'agio en peinture. On sait que les copies des plus belles œuvres abondaient déjà du temps des maîtres, et se brossaient même dans le voisinage de leurs ateliers. De nos jours encore, des copies des chefs d'école les plus recherchés se font à l'entreprise."

Dr. Véron, it seems, is very much of my opinion as to the superior prudence of buying modern works direct from the artists themselves. If M. Picard had done so, we are told that he would not have been cheated and pillaged as he was :—

"Malheureusement, les nombreux fripons qui exploitèrent l'inexpérience de ce nouvel amateur avaient pris soin de le détourner du goût des œuvres modernes. *Si Picard eût visité les ateliers de nos artistes et leur eût fait des commendes, il n'eût point été gruge et dupé par tout ce vilain monde.*"

In the formation of private collections, great attention ought always to be given to the *character* of the collection as a whole. Every collection ought to have a character of its own, and no work should be admitted into it which does not quite harmonize with that character. Nothing is more incongruous, nothing fatigues the eye more, than great differences of *scale* in pictures hung in the same room ; and there are different kinds of art, each good separately, which harm each other very seriously when seen together. In this respect the Vernon Gallery was anything but a well-selected one. Separately, the pictures are, many of them, of great excellence; but the *collection* is brought together without any attempt at unity ; and the pictures help one another no more than odd volumes on a bookstall. The Sheepshanks' collection, on the other hand, is more consistently chosen. Again, of national galleries, the Louvre is as badly ordered a collection as could well be imagined, there being no proportion whatever in the space allotted to different masters; it is a mere agglomeration, without any plan, in which the most precious things and the most worthless are stuck together like relics in some recent geological formation.

An *ideal* national collection would contain specimens of every great master, but it would necessarily limit the number of

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examples of each painter, which ought, in every case, to be the very finest procurable for money. In a few examples, masterpieces, carefully selected so as to illustrate the strongest period of the artist's career, a very sufficient idea might be given of all but the most versatile of painters. Each painter ought to have a room to himself, with his name inscribed over the door,[1] and on the walls within, in great legible golden letters, so that there might be no confusion in the minds of ordinary spectators as to whose work they were looking at. Under every picture there should be a brief account of the intention of the picture, and its history (but no attempt at criticism or pointing out of "beauties"), engraved in legible characters on a tablet of marble as long as the frame of the picture, and on which the lower part of the frame should rest. Black marble would be the best, with the letters engraved and gilded. No catalogue whatever ought to be required, because it is wrong to put poor people to the expense of buying one. If, as is generally the case with painters, a portrait of the artist existed, there ought to be a marble bust of him, as truthful as possible, placed directly opposite the entrance, with its back to the wall, and not above six feet from the floor, nor in the middle of the room, because that would impede the sight of his pictures.

Three or four copies of a brief biography of the painter should also be accessible in different parts of the room, legibly printed and simply framed, with a glass for protection.

Every picture should be hung with its horizon on a level with the eye of a spectator of ordinary stature, and there should be a clear space of three feet at least between the larger pictures, and two feet between the smaller ones, which space should be filled up, if possible, with velvet of a dark colour. If a nation is too poor to show its pictures to the best advantage (as that poverty-stricken country, England, appears to be), a flock paper, with slight pattern and all of one colour, is the next best thing to velvet.

It is not to be expected that a nation like Great Britain should be able to afford velvet for its picture galleries; but a private speculator, who has established a permanent exhibition

[1] This would not be possible in private collections, and often variety is sought for on its own account; still it is better for the study of any artist that his works should at least be kept together as much as possible.—1873.

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of pictures at Paris, was cunning enough to cover all his walls with it from top to bottom before he hung a single picture upon them, a piece of extravagance which would astonish our House of Commons if carried out, as it ought to be, in our National Gallery.

Arrangements such as these would do more to facilitate the study of painting in galleries than any one would believe possible who had not been accustomed to pass whole days and weeks in looking at pictures. The fatigue of such study, it undertaken in earnest, must always be very great, but it is now needlessly increased by a want of consideration for the convenience of the student. It is at present impossible for anyone to study seriously in any public gallery without tiring himself in seeking out works which ought never to have been separated, and straining his eyes, and stiffening his neck, in vain endeavours to see pictures which are purposely hung so high as to be out of sight. Galleries like the Louvre are an affair of mere vulgar national ostentation: there are great treasures in them, but no sign of any supposition on the part of their guardians that the treasures can be of any use. The great Rubenses in the long gallery are, it is true, hung *together*, but they are hung at least six feet too high, the only earnest endeavour after perfect hanging and helpful association in the whole collection having been bestowed on the worst pictures in any public gallery in the world,—the hideous series of illustrations of the life of St. Bruno, by Eustache Lesueur. *These* were hung in uninterrupted order, but the priceless Titians are carelessly scattered amongst other men's works, high or low, according to the caprice of the director or the convenience of the hangers.

These defects have hitherto been almost inevitable in national collections, which are accumulated gradually by successive Governments, depend largely on bequests, and are usually given over to the care of personages who have little knowledge of or interest in art. But such defects need spoil no private collection. The principle of giving a separate room to each artist may, in large houses, be carried out without inconvenience, and all the more easily if the owner has several houses. The practical difficulty of acting upon this principle is that ordinary rooms are often so badly lighted that pictures cannot be seen in them. A gallery may, there-

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fore, be a necessary adjunct to houses which have been constructed without reference to the convenient study of art treasures. The best gallery, however, would be a suite of small rooms, all lighted from above, and of which each should be dedicated to a particular master, in the manner already suggested for national galleries. If the owner were fortunate enough to possess a few pictures of great size and importance, he ought to give a separate room to each of them, with no other furniture than a large and comfortable sofa, placed at the right distance from the picture. An ordinary exhibition, where a thousand paintings are incessantly occupied in doing each other as much harm as they possibly can, is the perfect type of what a collection ought *not* to be.

The supreme merit of any collection is UNITY. Every picture ought to illustrate and help the rest. And if the buyer keeps in view some great leading purpose, the unity will come of itself, but it cannot easily be reached otherwise. Mere miscellaneous buying, according to the caprice of the moment, leads to the raking together of unrelated objects, but not to that beautiful and helpful order, which multiplies the value of every particle.

Having presumed that the reader really loves art, I need scarcely hint to him the desirableness of such arrangements as will allow his pictures to be seen. If he cares for them at all, he will certainly hang them so that he can see them. There is no better proof of the insensibility of many owners of pictures than their habit of hanging them where not a creature except the flies can ever hope to behold them. *Whenever two pictures are hung one above another, one of them is sure to be out of sight.*[1] Pictures hung in ordinary rooms, which people inhabit regularly, should not be crowded up to the very ceiling like an exhibition, but rather carefully isolated and distributed all over the house, such pictures only being allowed to remain near each other as are naturally fitted to be companions. They ought also to be intellectually in harmony with the uses of the room. Illustrations of literature, and portraits of authors, have a greater value in libraries than in billiard-rooms. I enjoy

[1] The only exception to this rule is when large pictures are hung in large rooms. They may be placed rather high and still seen from the opposite side of the room. In these cases space may be left for small pictures under them.—1873.

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good landscapes so heartily myself that I am glad to meet with them anywhere, but they have a better chance of being seen in drawing-rooms than in dining-rooms. A landscape is half lost unless you can see its detail, which from your seat at table is often impossible in a large dining-room. But a portrait of life-size loses nothing a few yards away. At the Manchester Exhibition of Art Treasures, Gainsborough's imperious Beauty awed the crowd, with her scornful eye, twenty paces off. Nothing is nobler in a dining-room than a series of lordly portraits by Vandyke or Reynolds; but their successors of the present day have such terrible difficulties of costume to contend against that it would be a dangerous experiment to surround a scene of festivity with gentlemen in well-fitting waistcoats and highly-varnished boots. And if you have any ugly portraits that you have an affection for, as is very likely, let them be placed in your most private rooms, where no guests come. They are better there for many reasons. It is in our calmest hours that the dead come back to us in memory; it is then that we hear again their dear voices; it is then that we recall most vividly their half-forgotten looks and gestures. The ugly portrait may be precious to *us*, but it cannot touch the hearts of strangers. Alone, we may look up to it through brimming tears; but the world will not weep before it.

I think the prevalent idea that the purchasing of pictures is exclusively a luxury for very rich people who can afford *collections* is unfortunate for the art. We all of us buy books, though very few of us can afford a library; why should we not all buy pictures too? The most of us pay wine-merchants' bills; and wine, though pleasant in its way, is no more essential than pictures. I see no other reason than this,—that we like wine better. Every comfortable house ought to have three or four good pictures, at least *one* in each of its principal rooms; but such a picture as its owner will not weary of, or else he must have more. And all good pictures are inexhaustible: some by a mysterious charm and fascination, as the melancholy portrait in the Louvre, opposite the great Veronese, or the face of the Mona Lisa; some by their mighty poetry, as the Téméraire in the Turner Gallery; some by a wonderful ideal of beauty, as the Phryne; and some by fulness of matter and endless harmonies of colour, as the best works of John Lewis.

But if we are to have as noble pictures in our houses as the

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merchants used to have at Venice, we ought to have as noble houses to put them in; not necessarily big ones,—our own are generally quite large enough,—but houses glorious with fair architecture. There has been as much money spent on English country-seats as would have built three or four Venices, and yet there are few of them that one could endure to paint; and such as are fit for pictorial treatment are so rather by reason of mere quaint picturesqueness than any high architectural excellence; the corrupt and barbarous Elizabethan being the most effective domestic style we can boast. And in our treatment of such old buildings as we possess we have almost all of us sinned against their builders, either by "modernizing" in the last century, or "restoring" (which means *destroying*) in this.

I cannot tell what is to come in the future, whether we are always to live contentedly in square boxes with oblong holes in them, as at present, or whether we shall inhabit worthier dwellings. For it *is* conceivable that human habitations might be erected which might stand alone in the fields and not be utterly shamed by the contrast between Nature's glory and their meanness; buildings whose marble walls might lift themselves against the blossoming trees, themselves variegated with hues not less exquisite; mansions whose sculptured portals might in some degree respond to the infinite sculpture of natural leaves and branches in the depths of their ancient woods.

When every house shall have good art which now has good literature, a good natural art will be provided to supply the want,—an art neither beyond the sympathies of our richer middle class, nor beyond its purse. That class will, of course, understand works of *genre* before it comes to understand landscape; but I do not despair even for landscape, for it seems that people cannot be in the habit of travelling every autumn without eventually perceiving natural beauty.

As death gradually removes the collectors one by one, they will naturally feel the desire, common to all their order, *to keep their treasures together*. For the pictures when separate are the work of the artist who painted them; but their helpful association is the work of the collector alone, and a work requiring very high qualities of judgment and right feeling. Now no man likes the idea that his life's labour will be annihilated at his death; and collectors find great bitterness in

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the thought that what they have so carefully associated will be dispersed as widely as ever when they are gone. And, if the public only has the wisdom to avail itself of this feeling in collectors of works of art, it may come to possess splendid galleries for the mere cost of the necessary buildings to keep them in.

All towns of sufficient importance to have a lecture-hall or a concert-room are also large enough to have a free gallery. They may be deterred from this for some time by the impression that they cannot afford to fill such galleries with works of art, but this is a needless anxiety. The galleries would be filled in a hundred years by gifts and bequests, and until then it would be well to remember that pictures do not look worse for being well isolated; and that, if there were a few yards of space between them for the first twenty years, they would be seen all the better for it. Let the galleries only be *large* enough, so as to invite contributions, and the contributions will come; but, if our municipal bodies do with the Provincial free galleries what the Government has hitherto done with the National one—that is, discourage contribution to the utmost—they need not hope for many contributors. The Vernon collection was first put into a dark cellar, and afterwards on the ground-floor of an empty old house, where no picture could possibly be seen; next it was removed to a temporary structure at Kensington. The magnificent Turner bequest was treated with no more consideration; and therefore when Mr. Sheepshanks presented his gallery to the nation, the gift was accompanied by the condition that it should have a building of its own. If the Government had erected a National Gallery twice as large as the Louvre, and invited private individuals to fill it, it would have been filled in a hundred years, and that most richly. All collectors, all living artists, should be encouraged to contribute pictures to the National Gallery, a responsible council having the power of declining unsuitable offers; and the nation would thus obtain great numbers of valuable works for the mere cost of the wall to hang them on.—1861.

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NOTE.

During the last twelve years the appreciation of modern pictures has become so firmly established that even a living artist may sell his works for prices equal to those given for old canvases of the same quality. It appears that £4,000 is the last price given for a Meissonier to the artist, and given too by a dealer who had to resell at a profit. Setting aside the class of sensation pictures, which were painted and bought as shows, and not for their value as possessions, it may now be considered quite a settled rule of ordinary trade that any picture of importance by an artist whose name is in repute is worth a thousand pounds, whilst exceptionally fine examples of great men easily rise to twice or three times that figure. And even those artists who are not famous, but have only a respectable professional standing, reach four or five hundred pounds for their best works. Whatever may have been the neglect of contemporary art in former generations, our age cannot be justly accused of it.

Every thoroughly good picture finds a purchaser, and many pictures which are not good find purchasers also. The art is handsomely encouraged, and yet there may be grounds for some anxiety about the direction into which modern picture-buying is forcing the energies of artists. It has given an enormous predominance to incident and costume painting, so that serious figure-painting and poetic landscape are abandoned by many artists who might have successfully pursued them if they had not been compelled to consider the state of the market. The decline in the study of the naked figure, on a large scale, is an evil which goes far beyond the mere extinction of a single branch of art, for it weakens other branches also. I observe too, with regret, that the sort of figure-painting which is popular has a tendency to starve our noble school of landscape by withdrawing men from it on account of its poor prospects in money and reputation. The kind of art which sells most readily in the exhibitions is not that which carries a great artistic nature highest or farthest, though it is conveniently adapted to the capabilities of a small one. This has one good result,—the majority no longer think it necessary to attempt high art, which is always too high to be within their reach. A young man, in the present day, who adopts the profession of art, soon

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perceives what is most likely to be a remunerative investment of his time. He learns to paint faces and costumes as prettily and cleverly as possible, and then seeks some incident such as Queen Elizabeth's toothache, or King Charles knighting the sirloin, which will at the same time amuse the public and afford a proper opportunity for costume painting. All this is very excusable, but really, when you reflect upon it, does it seem a quite adequate employment for men of grave and serious genius? Let anyone examine the catalogues of our exhibitions, and he will be surprised by the predominance of trifling subjects, chosen purposely to hit what the artists evidently suppose to be the popular taste. I do not insist upon any necessity for nobility of subject, for much of the very greatest art has displayed itself in perfect grandeur with scarcely any subject at all. A Dwarf, in the hands of Velasquez, yields grander art than an Emperor Nicholas in the hands of a vulgar court-painter; a field and hedge by Old Crome are nobler than Alpine ranges when painted by men who have no nobility in their own souls. But I say that when the subject is at the same time trivial and *obtrusive*, as it is in this popular art I am just now writing about, the whole picture is likely to be vulgar from beginning to end, and unredeemed by any elevated thought whatever. Great art has either no subject or a sublime subject; it has very rarely an obtrusive subject of a character to take away attention from itself.

Cultivated people may use their influence advantageously in discouraging those lower kinds of incident-painting which abound in the modern schools, and in helping, whenever it may be in their power, by money or by praise, all good art that, in addition to sound technical quality, possesses the characteristic of *nobleness*. Art which is only pretty and amusing is always a degraded kind of art, which does no good to the mind in the way of refinement or elevation, though it may do some good as a harmless diversion for the thoughts from the anxieties of daily life.

Whilst the present edition of this work is passing through the press, there have been several important sales of collections in England and France. The run of prices is much the same in both countries, though for different artists. The Sardanapalus of Delacroix (not his best picture by any means, I know it well) fetched close on £4,000, and a Theodore Rousseau in the same sale about £3,000. The last sale which has taken place this month (April 1873) gives a list of prices which, without presenting any one figure so

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exceptional as the preceding, gives a regular run of sustained high prices which fully confirms what I have written above, for all these works are modern, and some by living men. The pictures had belonged to M. Laurent Richard. Here is a selection from the catalogue, with the prices attained:—

		£
Corot	Nymphes et Faunes	920
„	Danse de Nymphes	560
„	Souvenir de Marissel	604
E. Delacroix	Medée	2,360
„	Christ au Tombeau	1,160
„	Saint Sébastien secouru	1,260
„	Christ en Croix	1,160
„	Lièvre et Lapin	1,242
Diaz	Descente de Bohémiens	600
„	Une Éclaircie	1,028
Jules Dupré	La Mare aux chênes	1,520
„	Le Pont	1,140
„	Les Landes	1,200
„	La Rivière	1,440
„	La Barque	780
„	L'Étang	720
„	Marine	760
„	Arbres au bord de l'eau	682
„	Le petit Pont	512
Fromentin	La Fantasia	1,620
Marilhat	L'Enfant Prodigue	1,220
Meissonier	Le Joueur de Guitare	1,480
„	Soldat sous Louis XIII.	1,248
Millet	La Lampe	1,540
Th. Rousseau	Le Givre	2,404
„	Le vieux Dormoir	1,440
„	Les Bûcheronnes	1,440
„	Lisière de Clairbois	1340
„	Métairie sur l'Oise	1,528
„	Cours d'eau (Sologne)	1,600
„	L'Automne Fontainebleau	1,480
„	Plaine et Marais	1,200
„	Landes Boisées (Sologne)	688
Troyon	Le Gué	2,480
„	Berger et Moutons	1,668

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		£
Troyon . . .	Vaches, Soleil couchant	1,082
„	Retour du Troupeau	1,020
„	Animaux à l'ombre	768

One reflection suggested by these prices is rather melancholy. Some of these famous artists, only a few years ago, sold their pictures with difficulty, and at prices scarcely sufficient to pay them for their labour. Eugène Delacroix and Jules Dupré are now great names in sales; yet Delacroix offered that very picture of "Sardanapalus" for less than £80 to the French Government, and they refused it. A picture by Jules Dupré, the "Environs of Southampton," was sold very recently for forty times the price which he received for it; or, in other words, his total remuneration amounted to six months' interest, at five per cent., on the present market value of the work. It is not always, or often, the artists themselves who benefit by these great prices, but the first purchasers of their pictures. It was at first supposed that prices of this kind were the result of a temporary fever or rage for art which would soon abate, but experience seems to show that the love of art, or of ostentation of wealth in this shape, is now so rooted in modern society that great prices for pictures will be quite a matter of daily and permanent habit. It would be desirable, perhaps, that works should be sold rather more on their merits and less on the strength of mere reputation. The merit of that picture by Jules Dupré cannot have increased forty-fold since he painted it. Nothing is more baneful to the work of an artist than the conviction that it is not the quality of what he does but the noise that is made about it which is the most powerful factor of success. The best state for art would be a state in which every man would seek to do what was simply right and good, with a well-grounded conviction that it would pay him best in the end. It is difficult to keep this conviction in its strength and calm when we perceive so plainly that it is not quality but reputation which rules the market.

A picture was discovered some time since, the intrinsic value of which was £8, for that was the highest price that could be got for it; but somebody made out that the picture had been painted by Cuyp, and then it was sold for £2,000. This is a good instance of what merit and reputation can do in picture-selling. The account stands thus:—

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	£
To the merit of the painting	8
To the reputation of Cuyp's name . . .	1,992

The reader will at once perceive the sort of discouragement which this brings to a good workman in the days of his obscurity. "I can only do the painting," he thinks, "I cannot write a signature that will sell it." The healthiest state for art would be that in which reputation had the least possible influence. A buyer ought not to purchase the signature, but the work.—1873.

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V.

FAME.

A FRENCH gentleman whom I know very well had a daughter —she is now dead—who was distinguished as one of the most brilliant performers on the pianoforte in all France. Her father was rich, and belonged to that class of society which considers that its daughters cannot earn money in any way whatever without loss of caste, so the lady could not be a professional musician, as she ought to have been, but was left to develop her wonderful talent for the delight of a few private friends. Such a position was essentially false. When Nature endows a human being with supreme musical genius, it is intended, not for the possessor alone, nor for any one circle of private friends, but for the human race. And the desire for publicity grew in the girl's mind as she rose to the heights of her art. It became necessary to give weekly musical soirées for the exhibition of her talent. After a while this no longer sufficed, and she performed in a few public concerts of the highest order. Some said that this was vanity, and not a ladylike tendency at all. But was it not the irresistible impulse of a true genius? Can a great instrumentalist be intended by Nature to perform for his own selfish pleasure? People are no more endowed with music that they may play to themselves than with tongues that they may talk to themselves. And when a nobleman of high rank, like the Marquis of Candia (commonly known as Mario), is gifted by nature with so admirable a natural instrument, we have all a kind of claim to the delight of it, as we have to the light of the stars. And though the instinctive thirst for fame may be often quenched by the coldness of high caste, there is such an appetite, either active or

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dormant, in all intellects to which fame naturally belongs. A certain degree of fame is essential to the free exercise of certain forces within us, and where there is a constitutional indifference to it those forces have no existence. The desire for widely spread celebrity, so commonly reproached against the artistic class as a weakness or a defect, is perfectly rational and right, and means no more than this, that all persons belonging to that class desire a field sufficiently ample for the free exercise of their especial functions—a feeling they have in common with many other classes.

It is necessary, however, to draw a trenchant distinction between this right desire for fame, and the morbid or foolish longing for it on its own account. It is one thing to desire to be celebrated, that we may work with due effect, and another to desire only that we may be celebrated. But even the most diseased and degraded craving for notoriety is often the perversion of a true instinct unconscious of its own import.

Fame of very different degrees and very different orders is necessary to men in different situations. Men of the highest social rank are immensely famous without the least effort on their part; and yet, as they are saved all that visible seeking after fame which characterizes artists of all kinds, they are never spoken of as celebrated, celebrity is so inevitable to them. We say of Landseer that he is a celebrated painter, but not of Victoria that she is a celebrated queen, because painters are for the most part obscure, whereas all monarchs are celebrated by the mere fact of their position. They cannot help being famous: their names are on every one's lips, whether they will or no. And they are famous because a great glare and blaze of fame penetrating into every nook and cranny of their dominions is necessary to the exercise of sovereignty. We may, therefore, take the fame of the monarch, to begin with, as the most obvious instance of functional or necessary celebrity, the only celebrity in whatever class which rational men desire; and in descending the social scale we are likely to find that the desire for fame, so far from being peculiar to the artistic class, is common to all men in their several spheres, each desiring that degree and order of renown which is suitable to his position, and necessary to his forceful and effectual life therein.

No order of fame is so certain as that which attaches to social position. The renown of monarchs is the best and

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most obvious example of this kind of celebrity, yet it is not confined to any royal or noble class, but belongs in minor degrees to all rich or locally influential men. The fame of rulers is necessarily co-extensive with the number of people they govern; and as the Emperor Napoleon is inevitably known to all Frenchmen, so is the cotton manufacturer known to his hands, the landlord to his tenants, and the schoolmaster to his scholars. Men also become known to us when we have need of them; and those who, from their occupation, render occasional services to large numbers of people, are known to large numbers. Thus, we find numerous classes of society, every member of which is inevitably famous, more or less, if he discharges the ordinary functions of his office. The governor is famous in the sphere of his government, and many labourers in the humblest occupations acquire a degree of celebrity which is not called celebrity only because it is so intensely local, but which, if judged by the number of persons reached by it, is as great as the fame of some true poets and philosophers.

If we examine the social organization of any populous town, we shall find many persons there who live in the broad light of a local fame of a very intense and penetrating kind. Fifty miles off, their names are scarcely known; but in their own neighbourhood they enjoy a well-recognized and brightly-focussed reputation. Like the brilliant chandelier of a ball-room, their glory shines with wonderful splendour on one well-packed crowd, but is prevented by opaque walls from reaching the outer world. There is the principal landowner first, who cannot help being locally famous, however modest and retiring his disposition; there is next the most important clergyman, who is known to everybody in the place; and the smaller incumbents and curates, whose names are household words at a thousand tea-tables, where they supply an inexhaustible topic of conversation. There is also, probably, a banker, and there are sure to be one or two solicitors known to everybody, though less talked about than the clergy. And the fame of the local surgeons is as certain as disease and death. And the principal tradesmen—the druggist, the tailor, the draper, the fashionable boot and shoe maker, the grocer, the butcher—are all absolutely necessary to the community, and well known to it both personally and by name. In a country town there is no obscurity, save for the poor. All rich proprietors, all prosperous tradesmen, are known to thousands;

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and, as a general rule, you will not find these people shrinking from the degree of publicity which naturally belongs to their station. The landowner will be a magistrate, and preside at public meetings; the clergyman preaches in public every Sunday, and will speak from the platform of the Literary Institute when called upon; the attorney, however bashful by nature, will not shrink from the publicity incident to his profession; and the tradesmen will print circulars and advertise. Of all these locally famous people not one perhaps cares about celebrity in itself; but their several positions absolutely require some degree of it, or the whole business of the town would come to a standstill. And if you were to take the most retiring of townsmen and make an artist of him, he would immediately desire a more extended recognition than his own little neighbourhood could afford, for a community which is large enough to keep a thriving grocer or a prosperous tailor might be far too little to supply cultivated people in sufficient numbers to sustain a painter of pictures, or pay for successive editions of musical or poetical compositions. The desire for extensive fame, which characterizes the artist class in our day, is the sense of a commercial necessity. Small populations afford no market for intellectual works, because the persons capable of appreciating such works are so rare that they have to be sought out from amongst millions. But as the feelings and aims of the Florentine artists were local because they could find appreciation and remuneration enough in their own locality, so our own artists would generally content themselves with local recognition if such recognition could bring them, in wealth and honour, an adequate reward for their labours. The difference between a locally celebrated man—as, for instance, a popular clergyman—and a widely celebrated one—as, for instance, a poet—often consists only in this, that the persons whom the celebrity has reached are, in the one case, concentrated in a single parish or diocese, and, in the other, scattered very thinly over a kingdom. The poet, however, is considered hungry after fame if he wishes his thoughts to be received by a few thousand persons, whereas the same natural desire on the part of a clergyman is called a "wish for an adequate sphere of usefulness." Yet is it not possible that a poet may wish to raise men to higher views than were before attainable by them? and could any poet, with such a noble conception of his calling, feel himself justified in

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dedicating his whole life to it, unless he saw good reason for believing that his efforts would not altogether fail of their effect upon the world? When the clergyman flattens his manuscript sermon on the velvet pulpit-cushion, he is sure of his audience, and knows that he is fulfilling an undeniable function in the world. The artist enjoys no such satisfactory feeling until he is what men call famous. Until fame comes, the author does not feel sure of a single reader, nor even of a publisher. The written thought may never see the light. And the painter who is not famous is scarcely more sure of producing any effect on his fellow-creatures, for the public will not look at what he does, nor the hangers in the exhibitions put it where it can be seen. For these men to desire fame is therefore not more indicative of vanity or weakness in them than it would be in a clergyman to desire a church. An artist without reputation is like a pastor without a flock. Fame is the necessary condition for the due discharge of his function of artist. What the parish is to the parson, with its thousands of inhabitants, fame is to the poet or painter with the thousands of readers or spectators that it brings him.—1860.

NOTE.

The fame of painters is dependent upon material conditions that cannot be wholly overcome. A picture may be engraved, but cannot be reproduced in colour, and all the photographic processes are imperfect and unreliable, so that to judge of a painter's work we have either to go to the canvas or have the canvas sent to us. The result of this is, that the true appreciation of painters, much more than that of literary authors, is confined to the inhabitants of large cities and to persons who often visit them. There are great numbers of well-educated people in out-of-the-way places who have never seen any authentic work by a great master.

The painter does not easily reach the great country and colonial public, and his ambition is to gain a metropolitan celebrity which may have echoes elsewhere, but he does not concern himself much about the echoes. Some artists are quite careless of fame, and

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neglect it, sending their works direct to the private purchaser without exhibiting them; but this course, though agreeable to a man who wishes to avoid the risk of being rejected at the Academy, or badly hung, and though prudent so far as it escapes the danger of criticism, is not altogether prudent. A private connection is not so safe as a well-established public position.

There is a healthy effect in publicity which is always good for us, whether the result is favourable or the reverse. Authors who remain in manuscript, painters who do not exhibit, become easily morbid, but when there is access to the public it is like getting out into the open air. Some readers may remember a *Salon des Refusés*, which was established along with the regular Salon many years ago in Paris. The discontinuance of this institution was not much to be regretted for the general public (except that it made them laugh most heartily, and so was good for their health), but it was a misfortune for many bad painters who were by its means relieved from the oppressive sense of being under an extinguisher. Publicity is good for all artists or persons who call themselves artists; obscurity is good for all students. We ought to pursue our studies in the most tranquil and complete privacy, to enjoy that privacy deeply and defend it jealously. The healthiest situation for authors and artists is one in which their works are exposed to the fullest glare of publicity, whilst their life of study is protected from curiosity and intrusion. But they do not in their youth understand the value of the obscurity that kindly protects their growth, and in their maturer years, when fame is won, they often undervalue it. One who had attained celebrity said to me, "How different the reality is from the dream!" as if the reality were a disappointment; and yet Fame had given him many distinguished friends, had lifted him from poverty to competence, had permitted him to pursue the noblest and most elevating studies. Reputation may not be so brilliant and dazzling as the ardour of youth imagines: a distinguished man may live outwardly very much as people do who are not distinguished, and be treated very much as other people are treated; he may find that fame is not a protection against suffering, and anxiety, and regret; and still it may be a most precious possession—a possession well worth all the labour that it cost him. There are many sour and disappointed persons who repeat that the aspirations of the earlier and more active half of life are illusions, like those silvery lakes in the desert that vanish as the parched traveller advances; as if God did nothing but cheat us by

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false promises, and every hope that budded were destined to a fatal blight. The plain truth is, that the reality is always different from the dream, and always more sober in its colouring; but that notwithstanding what in the realities of life may be described as the predominance of grey, the grey itself may turn out to be of a quality more exquisite than the more splendid yet cruder colouring of our early hope and imagination. This is so in love and fame: the ardent lover does not quite perceive what love will be to him in after years, and still may live to be thankful for the good that he had not foreseen; the aspirant after intellectual distinction may believe that celebrity is more splendid than he will find it, and yet live long enough to receive from it benefits that he had never suspected. The substantial benefits of reputation are not in satisfied vanity, but in the encouragement to cheerful perseverance in our work and in the enlargement of our opportunities for friendship, which are good for our moral health.—1873.

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XI.

ART CRITICISM.

AMONGST the various items which go to make up a newspaper, we occasionally find a column or two of criticism on the Exhibitions. These criticisms are not, in general, very entertaining or attractive reading, and it may be questioned whether anybody ever reads them fairly through. They are looked over with some anxiety by the youngest artists, skimmed and dipped into by visitors to the Exhibitions, and skipped by the rest of the world. They are probably inserted from the feeling that literary notice of some sort is due to the acknowledged importance of the Fine Arts. On the whole, the periodical appearance of these contributions may be accepted by painters as a compliment to their profession. The present writer is by no means disposed to regret the existence, or deny the possible utility of printed art-criticism. It appears to him a natural and necessary product, growing inevitably in every country that possesses active artists and an abundant periodical literature. The object of this paper is not to weaken the influence of the true critic, but rather to strengthen and confirm it by attempting a definition of his functions.

But it may be doubted whether all who write on art, or even a large proportion of them, are qualified by previous study to form opinions whose publication is desirable. It would be interesting to have an authentic list of anonymous art-critics, to know what are their usual avocations, and what proportion of their lives has been devoted to the study of art. M. Ferdinand de Lasteyrie tells us that fewer qualifications are

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required from Parisian art-critics than from any other writers for the French press; that the most inexperienced youths begin with the criticism of pictures, which is considered to require so small a stock of information, and so little judgment, that any raw boy may undertake it. Theatrical criticism is, however, in Paris, on quite a different footing, and editors take great care to employ qualified writers for that department. The cause of this difference is obvious. The Parisian public is itself a good judge of theatrical art, but not of pictorial; it therefore at once detects a pretender in theatrical criticism, whereas an ignorant critic of pictures may write on in perfect safety. The tendency of an advancing general culture is therefore to elevate the tone of printed criticism by excluding ignorant writers from the periodicals.

Many persons interested in the Fine Arts are beginning to feel that a great change must, before long, come over the tone of current art-criticism; that the duties of the ordinary critic will be better understood and more worthily fulfilled, and that the relation between the critic and the artist on the one hand, and the critic and the public on the other, will become sounder and more serviceable than heretofore.

The functions and duties of an art-critic appear to be as follows:—

1. *To utter unpopular truths.*—The reader may perhaps suspect me of putting this so prominently out of sheer perversity. But it is the first and most important of critical functions, the chief use of a critic being that he should announce truths which others do not yet perceive. There are but two things that a critic *can* state—a truth and a fallacy. Each of these, however, has two subdivisions as to its popularity; a truth may be popular or not, and so may a fallacy. The popular truth, being already sufficiently expressed, has no need of the critic's advocacy; fallacy of either kind he had better abstain from altogether; so there is nothing left for him but the statement of unpopular truth,—rather an unpleasant and ill-requited duty, yet the chief duty which the art-critic has to fulfil.

2. *To instruct the public in the theoretical knowledge of art.*—The work most needed is not as yet pure criticism, but art-teaching as preparatory to it. Art is a subject so deep and difficult, so infinitely subtle and complex, that it is only after

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the study of years that men even begin to comprehend it.[1] But painting has also another characteristic peculiar to itself, and which places its teachers and practitioners in a position of singular delicacy. Other profound studies, as for instance chemistry or mathematics, are seen to be difficult by everyone, and persons who have not studied them never labour under the illusion that they know all about them. But painting seems so simple, the object which it proposes to itself is apparently so obvious, that everyone secretly believes himself competent to judge of it. The really informed teacher has therefore first to persuade his less informed readers that painting is not a simple matter, but a very deep and subtle compound of several sciences with poetry; next, that they are themselves as yet more or less ignorant of painting; and thirdly, that he, the critic, knows enough of the subject to be a trustworthy teacher and guide. Now, even if the critic can persuade his audience that art is difficult of comprehension, he is accused of contempt for the public as soon as he implies his opinion that the public is generally ignorant of painting.[2] This is so far from being a just accusation, that some of the men whose genius we most revere, as for instance Byron and Scott and Wellington, knew nothing whatever of painting. Grown-up people, however, seldom like to be told that they are ignorant of anything, and indeed it is superfluous rudeness to tell people of their ignorance when they are already quite aware of it.

Men devoted to pure science, as for instance mathematicians, are spared this unpleasant necessity, because no one who has never learned mathematics ever dreams of setting himself up as a judge of merit in mathematicians. But when people are ignorant of art, they are so usually to that degree that they are not even aware of their own ignorance. The most politic critic is, therefore, continually driven into the

[1] In cases of exceptional endowment people may understand art early in life, by sympathy and genius, yet this early understanding is not either widely comprehensive or perfectly just. A youth may be a clever artist, because in order to be that it is only necessary to comprehend one department of art, but he can never be an enlightened and just critic, because to become that it is necessary to see many varieties of art in their true relations to each other.—1873.

[2] An accusation often brought against Mr. Ruskin.

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dilemma, either to hold his peace and so let error go uncontradicted, or else convince his pupil, by offensive demonstration, that he does not yet understand the subject. And when we consider that the writer on art addresses himself neither to the obedience of infancy nor the humility of the poor, but to men and women of mature age, already highly refined, often deeply and variously learned in other matters, generally belonging to the upper ranks of life, often very rich, and therefore likely to be very proud, highly susceptible, impatient of instruction, almost incapable of imagining that they have anything yet to learn,—the practical difficulty of such teaching is clear. And even if, after making hosts of enemies by his frankness, an art-teacher should at last succeed in persuading his readers that they cannot know what they have never learned, the difficulty of proving his own competence yet remains. In art-criticism the most instructed teacher is continually liable to err. Painting includes positive science, but it also includes much more. Of its noblest powers the feeling of some finely-organized human being is the only criterion; of Turner's dream-power, or Raphael's refinement, the soul is the only judge. And here is a question of deep and inborn affinity: we are not organized alike, and genius affects us variously. My impressions will seem wrong to you if I state them quite honestly, and so would yours to me. A critic, therefore, who ever quits the plain ground of easily ascertainable fact to attempt the higher criticism of feeling, is sure to awaken dissent. Rude and simple persons express this dissent with vehemence, and become personally hostile; intellectual men mark with curious interest the point of divergence, and calmly try to account for it. But both henceforth regard the critic as a fallible person, whose teaching is to be either rejected altogether or received with thoughtful caution.

It may be asked when this educating function of the art-critic is to cease. It is like asking when schoolmasters are to cease. Every day thousands of new human beings come into the world whose future social position will require them to pretend to appreciate pictures. Is this pretension to be a hollow make-belief, degrading to manliness, destructive to honesty, and thus vitally injurious to character? or is it to be the simple assertion of a well-founded right to a real opinion? If the latter, the theoretical art-teacher—the "critic," as he is

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yet called—has endless work before him. By means of books and articles in the reviews and newspapers, and, I think, still more by direct personal communication in the form of lectures, he will have to train the public in those eternal truths which are the beginning of criticism. He and his successors will have to repeat them over and over again so long as civilization shall endure.

3. *To defend true living artists against the malice of the ignorant.*—Every original painter, especially in landscape, has to pass through a period of contempt which it is in the power of any intelligent critic to shorten by demonstrating his fidelity to nature. This ought not to be an exceptional act of kindness on the critic's part; it is a simple duty which he is bound to perform whenever he sees the need of it. The most acute sufferings of men of genius are inflicted by the instinctive tendency of mankind to consider all originality a fair butt for ridicule. But little men are weak against a strong will, and one resolute voice will silence the silly laughter of whole multitudes.

A peculiar form of this duty is the defence of young artists whose powers are as yet imperfectly developed. It is certain that a young painter who sees and feels very intensely will try for too much, and spoil his pictures. The sort of injury to young men's work which comes of their good qualities ought, therefore, to be spoken of with the utmost indulgence, and even defended, by the art-critic. O. course he must state the defects frankly, but at the same time he is bound to enforce the truth, too often forgotten, that certain rare and noble qualities, like swans, are repulsive at first, and only become beautiful as they approach maturity.

4. *To prevent false living artists from acquiring an influence injurious to the general interests of art.*—Some good-natured people think it very wrong and unkind in a critic to point out the defects of living men, and so reduce their incomes; but as soon as a painter acquires any influence, his shortcomings ought to be clearly, though not discourteously, stated. For example, a certain famous painter, whose services as an illustrator of interesting buildings were, before the invention of photographic printing, of quite inestimable value, has for some years exhibited a peculiar kind of cleverly-tinted drawings in oil, of which he is the inventor. But a critic who should fail

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to point out the difference between these and real pictures would not be doing his duty. There is no necessity, either in this or any other such case, to speak of the artist with unkindness, or to vex and irritate him by sarcasm. It is merely necessary to demonstrate that his works, though exhibited as pictures, and therefore supposed to be works in colour, are only tinted drawings executed in oil, with no attempt to render the variety of natural hues. After reading such a criticism, the spectator might still sufficiently admire these works on their own grounds, but he would be protected from an influence which might else have vitiated his sense of colour, and so incapacitated him for the enjoyment of colour in nature, and prevented him from rendering the honour which is due to genuine painters who really *do* work in colour.

5. *To exalt the fame of dead artists whose example may be beneficial.*—It may frequently happen that some dead artist, whose name is not on everybody's lips, has nevertheless done certain things in such a supremely excellent way that attention ought from time to time to be directed to his works with reference to their especial quality. It requires some effort to remember very many names, and so, out of pure indolence, the human race prefers to repeat incessantly half-a-dozen of the most famous, and ignore the rest absolutely. This is very convenient, for it enables us to gain credit for a knowledge of art without heavily burdening our memories, but it is neither instructive to the living nor just to the dead. There is no habit more degrading to the human intelligence than that of narrowing our powers of admiration to three or four sets of objects. We ought to admire all that is good, whoever did it, be he living or dead. True artists, thank God! have been and still are numerous, and from every true artist there is always something to be learned that no other can teach us so well.

6. *To weaken the fame of dead artists whose names have an injurious degree of authority.*—One of the most melancholy things in the world is the enormous power for evil of the dead over the living. There are dead foreigners who govern England in many ways with a tyranny that we should endure from no living one. Great artists, who, when alive, were probably far too liberal and large-minded to conceive it desirable that anybody should slavishly imitate them, are erected, when dead,

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into colossal obstacles in the road to original achievement. There is scarcely a single famous painter whose name has not been misused as a means for the repression of genius. The way in which great men are admired by little ones is so utterly childish and irrational that they pervert even originality itself into an argument against originality. Instead of saying, "Raphael was original, and you ought to be so too," they say, "Raphael was original, therefore you are to mimic him." They can conceive of no other sort of respect for genius than that which monkeys have for humanity.

There is, unfortunately, only one way of meeting this fallacy. It is useless to argue that when Raphael worked he had no idea of binding down all future painters to his particular manner. It is in vain to suggest that it would probably be rather unpleasant than not to a man of original genius to be copied for ever and ever by endless generations of mere imitators. It is idle to hope that persons devoid of originality can ever be brought so far to comprehend its nature as to perceive that the object of its intensest scorn is not another originality, which it always heartily respects, but precisely that slavish imitation by which people imagine that they are paying it an appropriate homage. So the only course left is to point out the failings of great men; and as every great man has plenty of them, there is much to be said in that way.

We are sharers in, or witnesses of, a vast critical movement of the modern mind, the general object of which may be defined as the emancipation of the living intellect from the tyranny of the dead. Nothing whatever is safe from this movement. No sanctity of tradition will preserve the most revered writings from the severe scrutiny of this universal criticism. No dead historian will escape questioning as to the evidence for his events; no dead natural philosopher will pass conjecture for experiment; for the human race is advancing to ripe years, and no longer accepts as infallible the authorities that governed its infancy. Nor can famous artists, any more than famous writers and men of science, be henceforth the faultless gods they were. All their claims are to be sifted in a new and strange way, not by passionate partisans, but by calm, clear heads that care for no man's name. Out of this ordeal many a white fame will come shrivelled and frail and black, like paper out of fire; but others will only be brightened by it afresh. And the benefit to the people

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will be, that they will no longer worship blindly, like savages, but admire intelligently like thinking men.

7. *To speak always with absolute sincerity.*—There is a certain kind of criticism, very knowing in tone, and light and jaunty in expression, which scarcely even pretends to a conviction of any kind whatever. Such criticism is almost invariably insincere. When men are quite in earnest, they are never frivolous or flippant. Perhaps an insincere writer on art may often be rather shallow and careless than dishonest, and utter idle fallacies merely because nothing concerning art has acquired in his own mind the solidity and consistence of a truth. His main object is to produce telling remarks about pictures, and say as many smart things as he can find a pretext for. The criticisms in some of the French newspapers are perfect masterpieces of this kind of writing. They have nothing to do with art-teaching, for you may read them from year to year without learning anything. They appear to be quite purposeless, and only leave a general impression on the reader's mind that the writer must be rather a sharp fellow. If these men were to say to themselves before writing, "I will say nothing but what I think, I will set down only my real opinions," they would be much embarrassed, because they do not think, and have no opinions.

Happily, men have an instinct which protects them from the influence of the insincere. One writer with a set of real convictions, be they truths or mistakes, has more power in the world than a hundred without an opinion. The influence of insincere art-critics can therefore only be considerable in regions where no earnest one is active. They feel this so instinctively that when a true man appears, they always immediately combine against him, being afraid of him, as well they may. Any particularly sincere and earnest painter is also sure to be the object of their untiring animosity; but they laud false artists with a brotherly good-will.

8. *To give open expression to vicissitudes of opinion, not fearing the imputation of inconsistency.*—This, though put separately on account of its importance, is of course comprised in the simple duty of sincerity. A man who always says what he thinks, and whose opinions modify themselves continually, cannot always say the same thing. The opinions of men who think are always growing and changing, like living children. All honest and thoughtful men know this, and the sort of consistency which is

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merely the repetition of a formula is not, in their view, a thing to be respected. Such consistency is often to be attributed to simple stolidity, and still oftener perhaps to a very cunning sort of dishonesty. A dishonest writer thinks, before he commits anything to print, "I must mind what I am about, and not say anything contrary to what I have said somewhere else;" so instead of publishing his opinions of to-day, in other words his only sincere opinions, he dishonestly twists them to make them fit in with opinions expressed perhaps years ago, and thereby gets respected for his precious consistency. A stupid man, on the other hand, is consistent from sheer inertness. He arrived at a conclusion some time ago, and finds it too disturbing and troublesome to look into the grounds of it now, wherefore he also is held to be wise. But a writer who is both honest and intelligent is perpetually reviewing his own conclusions, and asking himself candidly where he may have been mistaken; and every time he feels convinced that he has been leading people wrong, he is simple enough to be in a hurry to tell them so; on which the people, who have a violent admiration for consistency, and a proportionate contempt for the want of it, utterly scorn and despise him as an unsafe and uncertain guide that does not know his own mind, and cannot tell whither he is going. And indeed in this last particular they are very right; for whosoever accepts Truth for his leader, and follows her faithfully, scarcely *can* tell whither she may lead him.

9. *To make himself as thoroughly informed as his time and opportunities will allow about everything concerning the Fine Arts, whether directly or indirectly.*—Art is so vast that it is scarcely conceivable how any man can become a very profound judge of it, without devoting his *whole* time to it. But I have inserted the phrase, "as his time and opportunities will allow," under the supposition that it might perhaps be possible for some writer of very extraordinary genius to acquire an extensive knowledge of art in the intervals of other and, to him, more important avocations. The only way to learn the rudiments of art-criticism is to draw and paint the facts of nature; that is, to produce careful studies from nature, each with the especial object of recording faithfully some particular natural fact. Perhaps a thousand such studies might suffice for the acquisition of the elements of natural law. They ought to be executed in different materials, according to their

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especial purpose. But to become an accomplished art-critic it is also essential to make studies of pictures and drawings by different masters, not in the way of copying complete works, but rather studying parts of them, always with a definite object. It is unnecessary to indicate the immense range of literary culture essential to the art-critic. The success of historical painting is not to be estimated by persons ignorant of history, nor can illustrations of poets be intelligible to spectators who never read verse. And there is this peculiarity about the position of every art-critic, that his knowledge must embrace the knowledge, not of one artist only, but of thousands.

Nor can people who stay at home become art-critics. No one can judge authoritatively of the representation of a class of scenery with which he is not familiar. The range of our landscape-painters is extensive. They illustrate every kind of scenery in Europe, and of late years they penetrate into Egypt and Asia. The critic must follow them everywhere, taking memoranda of natural facts. He must also travel to see pictures. The critic of literature may find in London all the books he needs; but the productions of painters are not so easily accessible. The colour of a picture *cannot* be reproduced. Hence nothing but the original handiwork of the painter himself is of the least use for reference. And to grasp the whole mind of a great artist we must see *all* his works, for every great artistic nature is so large that each picture is a new revelation of ranges of power before unknown to us.

10. *To enlarge his own powers of sympathy.*—How far this may be done by an effort of the will must depend on the nature of the man. But the elasticity and universality of his sympathy are amongst the noblest and rarest distinctions of the genuine critic. Painting is an expression of *human feeling*. Cold and unsympathetic temperaments, which are so often tempted to write criticism by the love of power, are disqualified for it by their own constitution. A true critic feels with the artist, and is therefore strangely tolerant of the most opposite kinds of artistic expression; an unfeeling nature prides itself on remaining unmoved, and actually esteems its own callousness a sort of superiority. An artist may be all the better for not being self-conscious, but a critic needs a highly sensitive self-consciousness to deliver him from that

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slavery to its own narrow personality which enthrals every simple mind.

11. *To resist the formation of prejudices.*—The Fine Arts naturally breed prejudice. Almost every painter is perfectly convinced that some process or colour is abominable, merely because he is not master of it; or that some natural object or effect is unsuitable for artistic purposes, because he himself has no feeling for it. One painter tried to persuade me that cobalt is incompatible with harmony, and that it ought to be rejected from the colour-box; and every colour has some bitter and inveterate enemy amongst artists. There is hardly a painter who has not some crotchet which the experience of many others proves to be quite groundless, and the more we know of Art the less we feel disposed to pin our faith to the dicta of any single theorist or practitioner.

The explanation of this with regard to painters is that their personal experience, being intensely narrow and practical, naturally gives rise to strong convictions, which they have seldom enough of self-consciousness to attribute to their simple personal cause, and which they therefore express as if they were absolute, and not merely relative truths. Instead of saying, for instance, "I don't enjoy green," a painter will very likely tell you that "green is incompatible with fine colour." Sometimes this takes the form of a violent animosity against some unoffending tree or plant. Englishmen often have a prejudice against poplars, and I met a Frenchman once who railed at chestnut-trees with an incredible acerbity.

Prejudices of this kind, however foolish and unfounded, are not of much consequence in painters, because if they have an antipathy to a certain colour or tree, they only avoid it. But one or two such prejudices might vitiate the judgment of a critic, so as to make him unjust to whole classes of artists.

The artifices of pseudo art-criticism are so transparent that it seems hardly worth while to indicate them; still, as they appear to impose upon some people even yet, they have a claim upon our attention.

To be a true art-critic it is necessary, first, to be in possession of an enormous amount of information about Art and Nature such as very few persons have either time or industry to acquire. Of course we presuppose a natural talent or disposition for criticism, but that, without the information, only

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makes people talk; and when people talk about matters which they do not understand, they generally talk nonsense.

The pseudo art-critic is a person who writes what is called criticism without being in possession of the preliminary information which is indispensable to the production of true criticism. His chief anxiety is to hide this deficiency from his readers, and to leave the impression on their minds that he knows all about the Fine Arts. This is easy or difficult in exact proportion to the cultivation of his audience.

A genuine art-critic often confesses ignorance of particular truths; as, for instance, in criticising a naked figure, if he does not understand anatomy he will probably tell you so with perfect frankness; or if he has not witnessed a storm at sea, yet has to criticise a shipwreck, he will begin by telling you that his opinion on the subject is not of much value, but that the remarks he ventures to offer may be taken for what they are worth. A pseudo critic *never* does this;[1] and whenever a critic pretends to know everything, it is the surest sign that he knows nothing, that he has not even an idea of what it is to know anything thoroughly. The pretence to universality in art-criticism is sure to be hollow, because human life is not long enough for a man to become a universal art-critic, if he studied for it ten hours a day, and never did anything else.

The immediate object of a pseudo critic is to discover defects; that of a true one, to arrive at opinions. The false critic cannot, however, afford to point out the defects of painters already canonized, because, by so doing, he would oppose the popular opinion, which he always takes care to conciliate. There is this peculiarity about painting, that it is impossible to produce an absolutely true picture, because some truths must always be sacrificed to others. If, in a landscape, the relation of one shadow to its light is truly given, the rest of the picture must be either false or out of harmony with that shadow. Again, colour has to be sacrificed to light, and form to colour. A painter has always to purchase truths with falsities, as men buy bread with money; and this necessity being not in the least understood by the public generally, offers to the pseudo critic infinite opportunities for the exercise of

[1] That is, up to the date of the present publication. When they have read this paper, they will invent a new set of dodges, amongst which—who knows?—even modesty may find a place.

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his little art or trick of petty fault-finding. And not only that, but the extreme difficulty of painting exposes all painters, even the greatest, to genuine errors, which a noble critic notices only when absolutely necessary, but which the base one fastens upon instinctively, whenever he dare, to the neglect of every thing else; so that the whole tissue of his criticism, like the talk of an ill-tempered woman, is tiresome and interminable fault-finding.

Then there is the safe old well-known critical trick of blaming a thing for not being something else. The aims of our English painters are, to their honour, so large and various that endless opportunities occur for the exercise of this ancient artifice. The wonder is, that there should exist people so simple as to be imposed upon by it; yet it still apparently answers, like many other cunning contrivances of our ancestors which modern ingenuity strives vainly to supersede. Thus if I want to leave an impression that John Lewis and John Brett are not what they should be, I have only to suggest that Reynolds and Gainsborough did not paint in that manner, which of course is undeniable.

But an invention which modern times may fairly claim is the art of hinting that you could say a good deal against a picture if you felt inclined, but that the faults you vaguely allude to are too obvious to require specification. This has great effect on people not very conversant with Art. Another form of it is to allude to classes of Art whose merit and value you cannot quite safely deny, as if they were so very familiar as to have become stale and tiresome. There exists amongst artists a complete vocabulary of slang, the great convenience of which is that it enables you to talk knowingly about your superiors, and, without committing yourself to the expression of a single real opinion, affect to estimate lightly all that they have accomplished.

The one distinguishing quality of all valuable art-criticism is *largeness*,—largeness of acquired information, to grasp the knowledge of so many thousands of artists, and largeness of natural sympathy, to enter into the individual feelings and affections of so great a multitude of minds. For to criticise adequately any artist's work, mere talent and honesty, though needful, are not enough. It is necessary to have learned what he has learned, and felt what he has felt.—1863.

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NOTE.

I observe a curious habit, and a very pernicious habit, in the art-critics of the newspaper press, which ought to be guarded against by their readers, and, if possible, also by themselves. When an exhibition does not strike them as extraordinary, they often condemn it, as if the quality were positively defective. This is most unjust towards the artists, who are only responsible for the positive quality of their work, and not for its rarity. It is one of the marks of the most perfect culture to enjoy things which are good or beautiful in themselves for their own goodness or beauty, quite independently of this other question of rarity or novelty, which is entirely outside, and has nothing to do with merit. Every rational person, who properly appreciates the gifts of God, delights in pure air and pure water, although there is an infinite quantity of both upon the world, and sees the beauty of a drop of dew hanging from a frond of fern just as he sees that of a diamond glittering at the ear of an empress. Everyone who has attained true wisdom, and that knowledge which belongs to wisdom only, well knows that there is an absolute value in certain gifts and possessions entirely independent of their rarity. Health and good looks are happily much commoner than certain rare forms of disease and deformity, yet health and good looks have always a positive and substantial value of their own, and ought to be rejoiced in by all who are fortunate enough to possess them, though thousands of others may be as happily gifted. Just so in art, there is a positive good to which rarity adds nothing, from which the utmost profusion of abundance can detract nothing; and the aim of the artist ought not to be so much to distinguish himself from his fellows as to reach this positive undeniable good. However numerous may be the artists who in any age have the ability and industry necessary for the attainment of positively good quality, their merit ought to be liberally acknowledged. It is the vice of vulgar criticism not to acknowledge this. Vulgar criticism wants to be astonished, and if it is not astonished, that is to say, if a school of art has attained a high general level of positive attainment, then this vulgar criticism declares that there is nothing worthy of its attention. May it not be, rather, that *everything* is worthy of its attention? A very numerous and very highly cultivated school of painters resembles, in its wealth of production, that inexhaustible wealth of nature which offers us far more than we have time or energy to enjoy, yet

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of which every detail is worthy of our careful study and able richly to reward it. And as the true student of nature can take delight, and find interest, in a group of leaves on the branch of some common tree, although groups of equal beauty may be found every summer by thousands of millions in every temperate climate, so ought we to enjoy quite heartily every sound and beautiful work in painting, even although such works, in our well-trained industrious modern schools, be thick as leaves in Vallombrosa. I protest the more decidedly against the constant clamour for what is merely novel and extraordinary that it unsettles the purposes of the younger men, and encourages them in the pernicious belief that a fair and honourable success is not to be attained by the quiet pursuit of what is simply and eternally *right*, but that in order to get an assured position they must attract attention to themselves by the most exhausting efforts. Whoever produces art that is right in itself deserves fair recognition, although such art may not be in the category of rarities; and the object of young artists ought not to be *excellence*, or the *excelling* of others, but sound quality in their own work, irrespectively of what others may perform. The whole system of estimating art relatively is prejudicial to its highest interests, since, wherever such a system prevails, the more a school advances in thoroughness of study and ability of performance, the less will the merits of the individual artist be acknowledged. Then the critics repeat that there are no distinguished painters, and conclude that the art is in decadence, when the truth is that the art has not declined, but risen, like rising waters which make isolated objects seem lower than they were before. Certainly the exhibitions are nearer to a level than they used to be, but it is a higher level, and to paint simply well enough to be up to that level requires good gifts of nature and very resolute application. Sir Walter Scott observed many years ago a similar rise in the quality of current literature, and affirmed that distinction grew more difficult as the prevalent culture rose. Distinction may be rarer and less striking in epochs of culture than in epochs of barbarian ignorance, but quality is not so rare.—1873.

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XII.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS IN PAINTING.

When Mrs. Beecher Stowe visited England, she found to her great perplexity, that artists and critics could no more agree about art than mankind generally can about religion.

To a thoughtful and sincere woman, anxious to find out what she ought to believe about everything in which she felt an interest, the discovery of the diversity in art doctrine which exists in Europe must have been quite painful. This diversity is a fact full of difficulty and discouragement to students whose only wish is to learn to think rightly, and whose degree of culture in the matter of art is not yet sufficient to give them an independent standing-point of their own. You pay a visit, let us suppose, to some eminent artist; and if your degree of acquaintance permit it, or you appear to desire it, he will probably, out of pure kindness to you, be led into a sort of talk more or less positive and didactic, and will enunciate some strong opinion, and lay down some hard dogmas, of the truth of which a long experience has convinced him. You go away, congratulating yourself on having acquired so much wisdom, and if you never talk with any other painter (or critic), you *may*, perhaps, rest satisfied with what you have heard. But if you know another eminent painter, the chances are that he will utter another set of doctrines; and if you know half-a-dozen, you will hear so many opposite opinions, that one of two results will be produced in you: either hopeless, helpless, lifelong bewilderment, or a quiet resolve to labour to acquire independent opinions of your own.

Is the truth, then, nowhere? Nay, rather, it is everywhere.

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For as animal life is a balanced warfare of opposite forces, so the life of art is a fine balance, resulting from the perpetual contention of warring truths. And each of these truths has its living enunciator, some painter or critic who insists upon it without ceasing; so that every truth gets uttered ultimately with all those advantages of vigorous statement which the hot ardour of partisanship can alone achieve. After all, it is but a difference of emphasis here and emphasis there. A man will always emphasize those truths about art which most strongly recommend themselves to his own peculiar personal temperament. This comes from the vastness of art, and the variety of human organizations. For art is so immense a study, that no one man ever knew the whole truth about it. Art is a world of which each student sees and knows some fragment, just as our globe is known in little bits to different members of the human race, each farm being known to its own farmer, each house to its own inhabitant, but no one man knowing all the farms and all the houses on the globe. And the opinions of artists and critics can only be profitable to us if we consider their own point of view, where they are on the great art sphere, and what they can or cannot see from thence. And it is also necessary to take into account their personal organization, of which, for this time, we have only space to consider two broad characteristics. Some men see synthetically, others analytically.

1. *The analytic habit of mind.*—If the reader has amongst his friends men of much intellectual culture, he will probably have met with an analyst. They are wonderfully keen investigators, and cunning hunters-up of particular facts, in the pursuit of which they pay no attention to other facts. They do not fish with a net, nor even with a trident, but with one thin sharp spear. It is, perhaps on this account that analytic people often seem to us at once so intelligent and so obtuse. When sufficiently excited to investigate a fact, they penetrate it very soon, but without that excitement every fact escapes them. The pure analyst is like a man always looking through a microscope: what he *does* see he sees with supernatural clearness, but that one point is very small in comparison to all that is going on around him.

2. *The synthetic habit of mind.*—Synthetists find continual pleasure in observing the *relations* of things, but from their

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largeness of range they constantly miss minute truths, nor do they ever see anything so vividly as the analysts see that which they have analysed. Whenever they have to sacrifice either a truth of relation or a truth of detail, they always sacrifice the detail. The synthetic breadth of view seems to analysts to want accuracy, and to be something very like a general bluntness. The synthetist, on the other hand, considers analysts to be clever children, surprisingly sharp on some points, and ignorant of everything else. The analyst esteems his own quality, penetration; the synthetist also esteems his own quality, which is the power of seeing many things at once, with all their mutual influences.

3. *The combination of two minds in one.*—It sometimes happens that a synthetist is gifted with considerable powers of analysis, or the converse. When the two powers co-exist in great vigour the result is, in painting, that union of breadth with detail which is so precious and so rare. An artist endowed with the double gift analyses all the pictorial impressions he receives by resolving them into their minutest particles, but at the same time he sees all these particles in their just relations, which the mere analyst does not. The best intellect for painting is one habitually synthetic, yet capable of the most accurate analysis by an effort of the will. When the analytic tendency predominates, even though there be considerable power of synthesis, the work is not so good, because good *wholes*, with defective parts, are always more valuable than bad wholes even though their parts be separately excellent.

4. *Primary artistic analysis of natural appearances.*—A finished picture is an attempt to render nature as nearly as possible in full, but many kinds of drawing purposely leave out whole classes of truths, and this, in itself, is a sort of rude primary analysis. Every natural picture, whether of landscape or figures, has at least the following elements:—

Shapes of objects, or spaces occupied by them on the field of vision.
Their local colour.
Reflected colour.
Light and dark produced by local colour.
Light and dark produced by illumination.

If we reject colour we still have the various other truths

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represented in a good engraving; but we may go much farther in rejection, and still remain intelligible. We may reject the light and dark produced by local colour, as the old masters often did in their studies, and as is done constantly, either absolutely or partially, in most of our popular woodcuts. We may reject even the light and dark produced by illumination, and merely represent our objects by outlines, giving the boundaries of their shapes. The way in which men have always been accustomed to take and leave the truths of nature[1] proves a certain power of analysis, without which it would hardly have occurred to anyone to translate coloured objects into white and black, and still less to represent them by mere outlines, which are only artificial enclosures of spaces, like fences round fields.

5. *Artistic analysis of light.*—Light presents itself to the simple and unscientific, but very observant, artistic mind in two different characters, as direct or reflected light. What are called shadows, being merely parts of the subject not directly illuminated, are lighted by complex reflected lights. In the study of direct light, the artistic analyst is so far an optician as to perceive that surfaces at right angles to the direct rays are most strongly illuminated, and that as the angle becomes more acute the degree of illumination diminishes; this fact, at least he perceives, because it is the first secret of successful modelling. But it is in the study of reflected lights that artistic analysis is most actively exercised. They come from sources often so unexpected that a definite mental effort is needed to trace them all to their various origins, and as reflections are almost always complex, the sort of effort they most frequently call for is analysis. Again, as light is endlessly reverberating, we have re-reflections and re-re-reflections, which, mingling together, produce appearances that all artists try to account for, and that never *can* be accounted for without the most subtle and delicate analysis.

6. *Artistic analysis of forms.*—The study of anatomy is the most definitely analytic movement in this direction in figure painting. Actual dissection is evidently analytic, but so also is mere observation, when it seeks the separate causes of attitudes

[1] And that for thousands of years. The Nineveh marbles give evidence of great power of analysis, and so does much Egyptian work. Their strong abstraction must have been based upon some kind of analysis.

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and expressions in living creatures, for these cannot be clearly defined without reference to the facts of anatomy. The best analyst of expression would be an anatomist accustomed to observe living faces under all the varieties of human emotion, with continual reference to anatomy. Sir Charles Bell was such an observer, and his treatise on the Anatomy of Expression is an interesting example of the analysis of art and nature in connection with each other. In landscape we have an increasing tendency to analysis, as shown by the special study of plants, even to dissection of flowers, and the careful analysis of mountain form with reference to geological structure. Mountains cannot be actually dissected, but by means of geological diagrams we arrive at the results of dissection. This kind of study has, however, the peculiarity that it teaches the *actual* forms, not the apparent ones; and therefore, though valuable to a certain extent for the definite information it conveys, would be of no use in drawing and painting unless carried on in conjunction with that other kind of form-analysis which deals with the appearances of forms, that is, the shapes of the spaces which they occupy on the plane of vision, and their projection.

The science of perspective, though of little practical utility in painting, was a resolute attempt to analyse the appearances of forms in a rigidly scientific manner. A more profitable kind of analysis is that constantly exercised by the eye of every good draughtsman when he looks energetically at a cluster of forms and decomposes them, just before drawing them. In such moments of hard looking, a good figure-painter resolves a model into hundreds of variously swelling muscles with many projections of bony structure, every one of which, though never so faintly marked, he sees and seizes in its own place. But I cannot help thinking (this may be because I try to paint landscape myself, and so feel the difficulty of it) that the most marvellous efforts in this kind of analysis are made by the best of our modern English landscape painters. The way in which they distinguish the thousands of quite different objects, every one of which has to be separately examined and studied before a modern detailed landscape can possibly be painted, is, I believe, the uttermost reach of analysis which can be pointed to in the history of art. For, first, there is the analysis of the species of

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objects, as all the endless species of trees, plants, rocks, &c., and then the disentangling of the innumerable crowds of them which cover natural scenery in infinite confusion. When you have analysed the human body thoroughly you are master of figure analysis, but when you have analysed an oak-tree thoroughly you are *not* master of landscape analysis; there still remain ever so many other species of trees, and then the mountains, and the rocks, and the infinite foreground vegetation, and the forms of water as it runs in torrents and rises in storm-waves, and the forms of clouds—fields vast enough, each of them, for the labour of a life!

7. *Artistic analysis of colour.*—In looking at any natural picture, whether a group of men or animals, or a landscape, we are aware of certain broad masses of colour, but also, in exact proportion to our culture, we perceive variety *within* the masses. For example, the popular mind of the Burgundy wine district has long perceived the splendid golden colour of the vines in autumn, so that the French department in which those vineyards are situated has for its title that noble one the *Cote d'Or*, a name peculiarly interesting as a national recognition of the glory of natural colour.[1] Every traveller, not colour-blind, who in the month of October drives along the broad road that runs past the Clos de Vougeot through Nuits to Beaune, sees on his right hand such a perpetual blaze of golden colour over the vast expanse of sloping vineyards, that the least observant cannot help talking about it and wondering at it. But I doubt whether anybody who has not tried to paint knows of how many elements that colour is composed: what subtle, delicate greys there are in it, what strange purples, what tender, exquisite greens, what spots of sanguine crimson, what grave and sober sorts of russet, what paleness of fading yellow, nearer the colour of primroses than of gold. The impression given by the union of all these colours is invariably that of deep, reddish, very rich gold; but pray how can a painter paint so composite a colour without first decomposing it? On finding himself in front of such a burning expanse of vine-leaves, of whose countless millions

[1] This is an artist's explanation of the name given to the Burgundy wine-district, but I rather suspect that the title more probably originated in the appreciation of coined gold, than of autumnal colour. The vine-lands are productive of enormous revenues.—1873.

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not two are coloured precisely alike, a painter's first thought is to sift out and analyse the elements of his own impression in order that he may himself afterwards, by the re-union of the same elements, reproduce the impression on the minds of others. For the public mind is, on this question, more critical than its habitual simplicity of language would lead us to suppose. A gentleman who has been driving through the wine district in autumn uses such simple, emphatic words to describe his impressions that you would imagine a little pure cadmium yellow might satisfy him, and that the greys and purples were superfluous. Not so. He would at once feel that the cadmium was crude (though no cruder than his own word "golden"), and to satisfy him you would have to paint the greys and purples, to accomplish which you must first analyse them.

It is probable that spectators who only look at pictures, and are not accustomed to the conversation of artists, may not give them credit for much of this sort of analysis; but the portfolios of many landscape-painters contain sketches and memoranda on which letters, or words, and sometimes whole sentences are written, from which it would be easy to prove that their authors really *do* analyse colour before painting it. The following paragraph, copied just as it stands from a note written upon a study of my own, may be taken as a specimen of such memoranda. It was scribbled hastily for my own guidance, and may be accepted for what it is worth, though I would much rather quote from the private memoranda of some other and better painter if I had the opportunity. The numbers refer to corresponding numbers on the study.

"The causes of the varieties of colour in these mountains are as follows:—First, there is the rocky structure of the mountain itself, which comes out bare in the bosses, as, for instance, continually in Ben Vorich (No. 1), which is the best example of ruggedness at Loch Awe. This bare rock gives a valuable cool grey tint, but grass grows where the soil holds, and this grass, as the ground is poor, reaches no more brilliant colour than a warm olive green. The most precious result of this conformation is, that wherever water runs in wet weather the *grass is much greener*, and this produces the appearance of an infinite number of winding lines of green, running in and out amongst the rocks in the most wayward manner, but in reality always subject to the laws by which water flows. And

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it is these green stream-marks which indicate, more than anything else except *shadow*, the true mountain form. Although visibly enough defined, they are always gradated at their edges into the olive-green around, because the water does not always flow down them in the same quantity, and only occasional floods refresh the edges, whereas every shower nourishes the roots in the middle, which therefore produce the greenest grass. The trees at present (May) are of a dark olive green, but the places where the wood has been cut are reddish. In No. 2 there is little variety of colour just now, the principal elements of it being the usual olive grass and the rock structure under it. The exposed ground to the right on this mountain is redder, though still very grey. No. 3 has a very slender covering of grass, slashed all over with reddish openings. In No. 4, just under the figure, or a little to the right of it, the openings are redder than anywhere else. In No. 5 the bare rock scarcely appears at all, but there is a great intricacy of mosaic on account of the grass being patched with heather. In No. 6 the bare rock is *nowhere* visible, but there is the richest mosaic of grass and heather. As to the middle distance, beginning with the promontory, some trees are now in their richest spring green, whilst the evergreens show dark amongst them, and therefore produce a telling contrast. The rest of the middle distance is a mosaic of purple and green, neither intense now." But all this, I fear, is becoming tiresome, and so let us get to the concluding sentence, which certainly seems to have been written by somebody who was trying very hard to analyse (or separate the elements of) the natural subject, and found himself baffled by Nature's inextricable entanglement. "*Objects come against each other continually where there is not contrast enough, either of colour or light, to separate them, and the consequence is an inextricable confusion;* this is especially noticeable in the leafless tree to the right, which is quite confused with the leafy one and the mountain background."

Here is only the very rudest analysis. Grass is greener in one place than in another because it is better watered, hills are slashed with reddish openings in the grassy turf, or covered with a rich mosaic of purple and green. There is another kind of colour analysis incomparably more delicate: that of a colourist actually working in colour, for then, at every instant,

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he is analysing hues which no words can describe, no writing decompose. A colourist *must* be an analyst of colour—how far consciously so or not it may be difficult to determine, some colourists thinking and looking laboriously before they paint, others working (as it would seem) by happy instinct. But out of analysis, in every case, comes the astounding sorcery of making things look quite right by means that seem so arbitrary, and odd, and wrong. If you go to any great work in colour, and stare hard into it, at a distance of six inches, you will see queer dots and streaks of colour quite unlike what lies on that part of the natural subject, but which tell truly, at the right distance, because they are *concentrations of colour elements gathered by the analysis of surrounding fields of colour*. They are true essences, obtained by analysis.[1]

8. *Critical analysis of compositions.*—Art-critics sometimes analyse pictorial compositions with a view to ascertain the laws of composition. True composers, I imagine, rarely, if ever, analyse their own work in this way, and the main use of such analysis is that it makes us admire good compositions more and enjoy them better. The sort of analysis with which critics often amuse themselves may be best understood by an example; and I will choose a drawing by Nicholas Poussin, a photograph of which was given in the second number of the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*.

It is a building of many forms, apparently acting in perfect freedom, into one structure of a character so peculiarly artificial that composition of this perfect kind is never found in any natural group. Nature gives abundant hints and suggestions, but never quite composes, in our human sense; just as the murmurs of waves and the whistling of the wind may suggest musical ideas, but never play tunes. In this drawing the structural arrangement of the group is obvious at a glance.

[1] There is a curious resemblance between the faculty of analysis in seeing colour and in tasting food. Many of us can know that a dish is badly cooked without being able to say why. Any practised analyst of flavours, a good cook, or an epicure, can somehow separate the most composite flavour into all its elements, and so finds out at once which element is superabundant and which deficient. The faculty of musical analysis is of the same kind. A good musical critic not only hears the *whole* of a chorus, but he hears all the parts separately, as well as simultaneously. And it seems probable that a composer, when writing an opera, hears in his imagination combinations of sound, which he has to analyse before making out his score.

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The centre is the head of Pan's image. A canopy is formed over it, not only by the trees, but by an imaginary arch begun at one side by the arm and trumpet of a faun, and at the other by the arm and timbrel of a nymph. See how curiously the right arm of the faun continues the curve of the arch, and as the hand did not go far enough down it holds a piece of drapery which carries the line almost to the thigh of the kneeling faun, which really bears, on that side, the weight of the arch. On the right the arch is continued by three flying pieces of drapery, and the body and leg of the boy, his foot in the right-hand corner being the termination of the arch on that side. Under this imaginary arch is another easily traceable, one of which the head of Pan's image is the keystone. This second or inner arch is constructed on the right of the outspread arms and head of the nymph taking the flowers, the head of the child who carries the flower-basket, and the head, body, and left leg of the boy who is helping the drinking satyr. On the left, the same arch runs from the right knee of the kneeling faun through his body and head to the head of the woman on the goat, then through the faun's head at her side to the left hand of the nymph carrying the faun, whence the ascent to Pan's head is very slight. The reader will observe how curiously all the other forms support this arch or correspond to it. The arm of the kneeling faun, the woman's outstretched arm, the arm of the faun at her side, are built together compactly. And observe that the faun on the nymph's shoulder keeps its right hind-leg lower for the same reason. To complete the composition, there are *festoons* of forms *under* Pan as well as arches above him. The most important festoon begins on the left with the inclined body and the extended right leg of the nymph on the goat. It reaches the ground in the thigh of the fallen satyr, and rises again through his shoulder to the body of the stooping faun. See how the three heads of the stooping faun, the drunken satyr, and the boy, carry the festoon up regularly on the right. There is also a smaller festoon nearer Pan descending from the uplifted hand of the nymph who carries the faun, through her right hand, and along the faun's head, to the shoulder of the nymph who has pushed down the satyr, thence it rises through her head to the drapery of the nymph taking flowers, and through *her* head to the timbrel. A lower festoon is completed by the flower-basket

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thrown down in the foreground, to which the foot of the riding nymph points, and the trees in the background are strengthening pillars within the larger or imaginary arch. The composition may be summarily described as a central image of Pan surrounded by arches and festoons of combined forms. It is a real *structure*, not a fortuitous agglomeration. Much more might be said of it in this way, for the smallest details quite curiously corroborate what has been already advanced, but this analysis is long enough to be read with patience.

9. *Artistic analysis in technical methods.*—Painters with a strong analytic tendency often try to separate the work of painting as much as possible, because such intellects find difficulties conquerable in succession which, to them, are insuperable when united. The excessive technical difficulty of painting consists in this, that with one and the same touch the artist has to give true form and true colour—it is like a game of billiards where you have to hit two balls with one stroke, with the difference that in painting misses are injurious to the beauty of the work and are hard to retrieve. The finest execution is therefore always marked by great power of synthesis, of which more presently; but it is safer for artists who are not endowed with that power to divide the difficulties as if they were hostile armies, and attack them separately. Such painters often work in a sort of mosaic on a carefully prepared design; and as working with mixed tints is a kind of synthesis, they sometimes carry the analytic principle so far as to resolve the tints into their components, and paint with small touches of quite pure colour. The practical analysis of natural tints has never, I believe, been carried farther than by Whaite and Alfred Hunt, who succeeded in rendering them with remarkable brilliance on the principle of resolving compound tints and representing them by the juxtaposition, or superposition, of the component colours.[1] It is right to add that conquering difficulties by dividing them was not the only object of these artists. They perceived that the brilliance of pigments was always dulled by mixture, and that the too common modern practice of unlimited intermixture led to ruinous results. To avoid this they adopted the plan of working in pure colours on a white ground, and, as they liked form, they chose to work on a careful design. But the analytic tendency

[1] At least in their practice before 1863.

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in execution is by no means confined to these artists and their school. We observe it in much modern English work. Holman Hunt's practice is analytic: indeed the pre-Raphaelite way of work is naturally analytic, because pre-Raphaelitism has, from the beginning, been an analytic movement, and may be best defined as a new analysis of nature. When pictures are painted on careful designs and finished part by part, it is analytic execution. When they are first blocked out roughly in formless masses and brought forward all at once into drawing and detail, it is synthetic execution. Of course in the first instance there must co-exist considerable intellectual power of synthesis, and, in the second, of analysis, but as regards execution the distinction is real.

10. *Analytic systems of art-study.* — The principle of analysis may be carried very far in art education. The pupil may have the difficulties so ingeniously divided for him as rarely to present more than one at a time for him to contend against. The good of this system is that by separating the difficulties they are more thoroughly understood and more easily conquered; the evil of it, that it in no way represents the struggles of the mature career of an artist whose supreme embarrassment is *not* the number of difficulties, but the fact of their intimate inter-union. The pupil who has always been breaking the sticks one by one is likely to experience severe disappointment when he discovers that he cannot break the faggot.

Advocates for the analytic system of art-education generally attach such importance to drawing, that they would have painting postponed until the pupil has acquired the power of accurate design. The following sketch of an analytic system of education in landscape will show how far the principle may be carried. As to the policy of adopting any such system in practice, it would be wise to do so only on condition of frequently laying it aside for a completely synthetic way of work. For example, a pupil who should work alternately six months with a severe analyst and six with a synthetist would escape the dangers peculiar to each method when followed exclusively.

(1) Study of simple objects in black and white with the pen, like Dürer's woodcuts, not recognizing local colour, and only using shading to help the expression of form. Common day-

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light permitted, but no sunshine. Great attention directed to firmness and accuracy of line.

(2) Study in black and white, aiming chiefly at the translation of local colour. No sunshine admitted. Form not so severely required as before.

(3) Studies of the same objects in sunshine. In the attempt to render *light*, form and local colour not severely required from the student. This involves the careful study of cast shadows and reflected lights.

(4) Analytic study of many classes of natural objects by the foregoing methods. Leaves, flowers, grasses, mosses, branches, twigs, trunks, stones, rocks (especially such portions of them as best show their structure), parts of mountains, bits of foreground, and so on. All the principal species of trees, rocks, &c., to be studied separately.

(5) Studies admitting colour, but no sunshine. These studies being entirely for local colour, everything else is, for the time, treated as of minor importance. Repetitions of the analytic study of natural objects, this time with their local colour, and *for* it peculiarly.[1]

(6) Studies for coloured sunshine. New analysis of natural objects in sunshine. Truth of sunlight and sun-colour all that is aimed at.

III. *Partial or irregular analysis.*—It is only in very recent times that the doctrine that everything is worthy of study has been admitted by artists, and even yet we find figure-painters who will not take the trouble to analyse landscape seriously, and therefore cannot paint it at all. Ingres is a notable example of partial analysis; he has analysed the human figure, and can draw it well, but he cannot draw a stick or a stone, far less a wave of the sea or the ripple of a brook. But if the reader cares to seek for examples of partial analysis he will find them abundantly in the Exhibitions. The best painting requires an insight so universal that nothing can escape it, and as this sort of insight is rare, we find that one painter analyses one thing, and another another, but that nearly all of them miss some orders of truths. Partial analysis is indeed only another name for imperfect information, which cannot be hidden in painting, as it may in literature, by artfully passing one's ignorances in

[1] The best time for such study as this is in gloomy weather, after, or during rain. The local colours are then at their fullest, and still imitable.

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a parenthesis and loudly enlarging upon the little we know. The empty space in the painter's brain is represented by a corresponding emptiness in his pictures.

12. *Pernicious excess in analysis.*—When painters see detail very clearly, they are often fatally led into morbid or excessive analysis. In this state the artist perceives detail with surprising minuteness, and is, as it were, fascinated and blinded by it, than which nothing can be more dangerous to any painter, for then he cannot see one natural picture, nor even a part of it, but only the particles of parts.

We see the same tendency at work in other things. Grammar is an analysis of language, and may be of some use in its way, provided we do not weary ourselves with it. But excessive grammar is over-analysis, and grammarians are often rendered insensible to the artistic beauty of great literary works by their petty grammatical habits. They will interrupt you in the finest passages to expatiate on the force of a particle. As there are two ways of reading Homer, that of the poet and that of the philologist, so also there are two ways of reading nature,—the artist's and the analyst's.

13. *Premature synthesis.*—Synthesis, which is attempted before a sufficient power of analysis has been acquired and exercised. The colour work of amateurs, who are so situated as to be able to devote little time to the practice of art, is nearly always rendered nugatory by premature synthesis. So also, very frequently, is that of artists by profession who are obliged to expose pictures for sale without having given sufficient time to analysis in the way of study.

14. *Synthesis in light.*—The lightness and darkness of each object, being relative, must be translated synthetically, that is, with continual reference to the rest of the picture. When this is not done, the parts may be separately true, yet false when considered with reference to the whole. The necessity for synthetic *and artificial* systems of light in pictorial art results from the difference in scale of natural and pictorial light, for, if they were the same, a part truly copied in its light and dark would also be true relatively to the whole, which it cannot be so long as our scale is shorter than Nature's.

There is also, in all good pictorial art, a synthetic and artificial *arrangement* of light. It very seldom occurs that a natural scene is illuminated in a way precisely fitted to the

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purposes of art, because the first want of human art is *unity*, and Nature, in those fragments of her creation which we make into artistic wholes, seldom cares to achieve unity. *The real unities of Nature are so large as to be beyond the grasp of painting.* Her landscapes are fragments, but the globe is a rounded whole; her men and women are imperfect details, but the human race is a balanced being. Art takes tiny fragments of Nature's great wholes and makes little wholes of them. Nature's illumination is generally scattered—wants concentration. Good artists contrive, without violating the laws of possible phenomena, to light their pictures in such a manner that the light, instead of shattering the composition into fragments, shall bind and bring together all its chiefest elements.

15. *Synthesis in colour.*—Colour requires higher power of synthesis than anything else in art, for although analysis is of use in studying natural colour, it does not of itself enable us to make colour of our own; because, whether you will or not, in painting on any one part of your picture you are really painting upon, that is, changing the colour of, the whole canvas at once, and unless you do this always synthetically you will never succeed. Every new touch changes all the touches already laid,—if warmer it cools them, if cooler it warms them, if brighter it dulls them, if duller it lends them brightness. This is so curiously true that visitors to the studios of painters constantly believe that the artist has been working on portions of his picture which he has never touched since their previous visits. And they are right.

16. *Synthesis in form.*—Commonly called composition. The synthetic arrangement of forms is strikingly apparent in all first-rate design, and it is one of the eternal distinctions which separate good design from photography. In photography the arrangement of forms can *never* be synthetic. You may group your models and materials as artfully as you like, there will be no synthesis. So in living groups of costumed models, called *tableaux vivants*, which people sometimes amuse themselves by getting up, it is not possible, by any amount of care in arrangement, ever to obtain artistic synthesis. Why?

Because synthesis in form does not merely *arrange* given forms, but runs into, and modifies, every line in the forms themselves. A great inventive artist never in a picture draws

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anything exactly as it is, but compels it into such shapes as he wants in that place, having reference all the time to all the other shapes either already put, or to be put, in all the other parts of the picture. Hence the imitation of artistic composition by grouping things for the photographer, or by *tableaux vivants*, is a manifest absurdity.

Something of the mutual effect of colours is observable in the relations of forms. They modify each other to a considerable extent by contrast; a stiff line seems doubly stiff beside a flowing one, and a slight curve is much more perceptible when you set it beside a straight line. Good composers avail themselves of this property with great skill, and their lightest grace and sturdiest strength are due to it.

17. *Synthetic systems of art study.*—A difference of opinion exists amongst painters as to whether young artists ought to begin to paint before they have mastered drawing, or only take up the palette when already accomplished draughtsmen. This difference may be stated as, on the one hand, an advocacy of the analytic system of art-education, and, on the other, of the synthetic. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Leslie are amongst the synthetists; and I know a good painter, who, on finding that a young friend of his was drawing assiduously to improve his forms, recommended him most urgently not to draw in black and white, but rather try to improve his drawing gradually *whilst painting;* in other words, to study synthetically.

There is much truth in this view, and much importance is to be attached to the fact that since painting is, after all, work emphatically synthetic (being the union of many forms and colours and lights and darks into artistic wholes), it must be right to get the student as early as possible into the *habit* of synthesis. But painting is a synthesis of what? Of innumerable truths. And it is found, in practice, that the human faculties are not large enough to learn all these truths at once.

The most rational conclusion appears to be that the right principle of early study is analysis; but that between the period of studentship and that of mastery there exists an interval, in many cases long and laborious, when the artist is painfully acquiring the power of synthesis, that is, the power of expressing all at once, and harmoniously, the many different facts which he is already able to express separately.

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Such are a few of the reflections which naturally suggest themselves, in one shape or other, to every painter who thinks about his art. But it is seldom that painters are willing to recognize the full value of *both* the two great mental operations which govern the art of painting. Some urge the necessity of analysis: the separation of aim in study, the resolution of all things into their component parts, and the conscious investigation of causes. Others, and these generally the greater men, say that all analysis is valueless except as a part, and by no means the most difficult part, of study—that for performance it goes a very little way; and these latter have such slight respect for the power of analysis, that they neither value it much in themselves nor honour it in their fellow-artists. They assert, too, that a strong healthy eye, which sees things truly as they appear, and a retentive memory, which holds what the eye has seen, are better possessions for a painter than the power of minute analysis. And they are certainly right so far, that analysis becomes a habit, and always has a tendency to attach itself to some facts to the neglect of others, so that a skilled analyst sees a few things with supernatural clearness and is blind to everything which he has not analysed. On the other hand, a true synthetist sees quite *impartially*, and this impartiality makes him largely receptive. The analyst penetrates and resolves many things, but a perfect synthetist would receive all things.

The best state for a painter would, no doubt, be to see things all at once, in their right pictorial relations, and then to be able to keep the natural group or scene in his memory with perfect distinctness, and *look* at it, as one looks at a real scene, but without any effort of analysis, simply seeing and copying the complete picture in the mind. Painters are generally strong as they approach to this state, and weak as they recede from it; the weakest state of all being when the artist finds himself compelled to think about what he is doing, and to analyse nature with full consciousness of his occupation. Nevertheless, simplicity of sight and strength of memory are so rare, that most painters are wise in making up for the deficiency of these, so far as they are able, by scientific accuracy of analysis and laborious gathering of registered observations. Yet, though it may be permitted to accumulate materials by such processes of separation, we may rest assured

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of this, that in all fine art, the supreme Lord of Construction, who, if present, makes precious the most meagre materials, and in whose absence all that knowledge can contribute and wealth procure will be lavished vainly, is that strong ruler Synthesis, whom Analysis may effectually serve, but can never either replace or represent.—1864.

NOTE.

Analysis seems to be resorted to in the study of painting, partly for the purpose of saving time. Thus a painter will often draw in black-and-white (although drawing in black-and-white is not his business) in order to get at form more rapidly than he could get at it through colour. Artists advance more rapidly in the beginning by analytic education, but there are the best reasons for believing that if they studied synthetically from the first, advancing only from simpler to more complicated subjects, but taking light, form, and colour all together, they would have a more perfect mastery in their maturity, and be more likely to execute real *painting* than the *painted drawing* which is so common, and to produce *colour* rather than *colours*.—1873.

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XIII

THE REACTION FROM PRE-RAPHAELITISM.

THE paper on Analysis and Synthesis in Painting was written to clear the way for this. Having considered the great theoretical question at length, we can now dispose of this practical one briefly.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement is understood to have combined two very distinct aims: first, the intellectual elevation of art by the choice of noble and original subjects, and secondly, its technical advancement by a new and minute analysis of nature. The movement was therefore at the same time very ambitious intellectually, and very arduous practically, requiring both considerable mental power for conception and enormous labour of hand for realization. In two words, the Pre-Raphaelites were intellectual and analytic, both to a superlative degree; previous art, in England at least, having generally been unintellectual (much of it even *bête*), and either nobly synthethic (Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner), or feebly attempting synthesis (West, Haydon, &c.), or again partially analytic (Wilkie, Landseer), but never yet resolutely and thoroughly analytic.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement in painting was contemporary with similar tendencies in the outer public mind. We are generally more intellectual than men of the last generation, because more familiar with literature, and consequently with many forms of thought which find full expression in literature, yet have no sufficient room for development in the fragmentary patchwork of common conversation. The steady increase of scientific studies has also given very many of us the habit of

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analysis. The father and mother of modern Pre-Raphaelitism were modern literary thought and modern scientific investigation of the facts of nature.

The reader is familiar with the chief products of the movement. He has a general idea of what constitutes a pre-Raphaelite picture. But if he endeavours to construct a definition of a Pre-Raphaelite picture, he will find it exceedingly difficult; I venture to add that he will not be able to construct such a definition at all without including some of the *defects* of Pre-Raphaelitism; and I argue that as in course of time, by a reaction natural to men of high artistic endowments, the Pre-Raphaelite leaders will probably get rid of these defects, they will then produce works which, however excellent, will no longer be recognizable as Pre-Raphaelite works, or distinguishable by the more obvious marks of the sect.

The marks of the sect were intellectual and emotional intensity, marvellous power of analysis, sensitiveness to strong colours, insensitiveness to faint modulations of sober tint,[1] curious enjoyment of quaintness and rigidity in arrangement, absolute indifference to grace, and size, and majesty.

Now, as the greatest artists hitherto have become synthetic as they approached maturity, and used analysis only for the acquisition of knowledge, it seemed likely that after a while the Pre-Raphaelites would begin to feel that so long as they combined the greatest possible amount of analysis with the smallest allowable degree of synthesis, they were paying unequal worship to the dual deity of art. The pendulum had swung so far on the side of analysis, that it needed little foresight to predict a movement in the opposite direction.

Besides, there was the question of individual temperament, a consideration not to be overlooked in dealing with an art so peculiarly the product of individual organizations.[2] 'It needed

[1] This is exactly equivalent to saying that their colour-power was in a very early stage of development.—1873.

[2] For example, the temperament of Horace Vernet. For Vernet to have attempted to paint like Holman Hunt would have been artistic suicide. Vernet, at the best, could only have made himself a third-rate Pre-Raphaelite, and as such would not have expressed one-hundredth part of the conceptions he lived to realize. Such as he was, without being in the strict sense a great painter, he expressed his particular talent most completely; and I argue that if he had attempted to be a Pre-Raphaelite, that particular talent of his would never have found expression at all. But

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not only wonderful patience to produce Pre-Raphaelite pictures, it needed also the peculiar faculty of dwelling long on one subject. Some men can do this quite contentedly, others cannot endure to do it at all. Leonardo really *liked* to be long about a picture, did not wish to see it finished, as some mothers do not wish to see their children become men and women. On the other hand, artists like Turner and Gustave Doré, being pressed by multitudes of conceptions, are impatient to get the idea of to-day expressed, that to-morrow may be given to to-morrow's thought. It is evident that artists of this latter class will always seek for expeditious modes of expression, and refuse long elaboration, not because they do not see detail, but because they would rather utter a thousand thoughts briefly than ten thoughts elaborately.

Then, again, though Pre-Raphaelite work *when at its best* is very admirable, its aims are so high and its pretensions so great, that it does not admit of mediocrity. No painter, who held large views of his art, could endure to produce second-rate Pre-Raphaelite pictures. Art which professes only to suggest and remind, may fail in many things, and still be precious to us for its obscure hints of natural beauty: art which professes to be perfect imitation makes such immense claims that success is proportionately more difficult. Pre-Raphaelitism was only *too* uncompromising; for the art of painting is confessedly a compromise. And the minuter the detail you profess to give, the more accurate must your information be. Prudent men keep *within* their science, and do not profess to know everything; he who offers to tell us the *whole* truth has need of enormous knowledge.

It is on these grounds that I have always felt convinced that the Pre-Raphaelites would not effect that universal and permanent revolution in our school of painting which Mr. Ruskin seems at one time to have anticipated. That they have exercised a great and, on the whole, a beneficial influence is indisputable; that they will succeed in imposing the two principles of intellectual conception and technical elaboration on the English school generally is not to be hoped for. Still less

there need be little apprehension, in these days, of such loss as this would have been; for men of original genius will not now submit to any system, however excellent in itself, when submission would involve the stifling of their own faculties and the abdication of their own place.

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is it probable that they will revolutionize the disciplined schools of the Continent.

One of the conclusions about painting, to which I have been most unwillingly driven, is that it is not *necessarily* an intellectual occupation. There are painters who are intellectual men, and such men put an intellectual element into their art; but there are also very good painters who are not, in the right sense of the word, intellectual. Good eyes and skilful fingers are of more practical importance to a painter than understanding. This is a reason why an intellectual *school* of painters is not likely to be realized, for in every school there will be men of strong sight and manual skill without much power of thought.

Then as to minute elaboration, the mightiest painting refuses it almost always, for master-painters will not waste months in expressing facts by copyism which they can express better *by their magic* in a day. That magic may be defined as the power of representing things with profounder truth by substitution of abstract results of study, than by imitation of the object. As the Pre-Raphaelites acquire this power, they will desist from minute elaboration; and other artists, endowed from the beginning with this gift, will reject the Pre-Raphaelite discipline.

It was curious to observe this turning-point in the career of Millais. The following quotation from Mr. Ruskin's Notes on the Academy Exhibition of 1857 marks it:—"The change in his manner, from the years of Ophelia and Mariana to 1857, is, not merely Fall, it is Catastrophe; not merely a loss of power, but a reversal of principle; his excellence has been effaced, as a man wipeth a dish—wiping it, and turning it upside down." The truth is, that Millais, before going on his new tack, was for a while arrested in his progress, even visibly receding, his uncertain sails shivering powerless in the wind. And Mr. Ruskin, the most keenly interested on-looker, feeling instinctively that the Pre-Raphaelite period was over, raised this bitter cry of disappointment and regret. Since then Millais paints better than ever, but he is no longer a Pre-Raphaelite. Take, for instance, the picture called "My First Sermon," a most charming, loveable, covetable work, but not in any obvious way bearing the marks of Pre-Raphaelitism. The thought is pretty and interesting, but not profound; the

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execution skilful, but not elaborate. It is a quite successful bit of popular painting, equal to Leslie in felicity of expression, superior to him in colour. But if "My First Sermon" is a Pre-Raphaelite work, I am at a loss to recognize the signs by which it is known as such. And the illustrations to popular novels which Millais has of late years so richly given us do not visibly exemplify the principles of Pre-Raphaelitism.

It is of course difficult to prove positively that any artist of the realist schools is or is not a Pre-Raphaelite, because the Pre-Raphaelites have never publicly defined their doctrines; wisely leaving the public and the critics to find them out as they best might, and by this policy reserving much liberty of action. I have the greatest respect for Millais, who, though very unequal and with grave defects, seems to me as unquestionably a man of genius as either Keats or Tennyson, and as sure of immortality. But if Millais is a Pre-Raphaelite now, I see nothing to exclude Landseer, or Leslie, or any other thorough modern, from the sect. We have been told that one important distinction of Pre-Raphaelitism was that, whereas other men illustrated poets and novelists, the Pre-Raphaelites were to be their own poets; yet as Leslie illustrated Cervantes so Millais illustrates Mr. Anthony Trollope. We have been told that another distinction of Pre-Raphaelitism was its care and labour in detail; but the present work of Millais is not so careful as that of Gérome, or Meissonier, or Blaise Desgoffe, yet nobody calls these men Pre-Raphaelites. We may be told now that this popularized art is the natural development of Pre-Raphaelitism, which is becoming freer in workmanship and more popular in subject; that is to say, that the school has developed itself into its opposite, as Protestantism sometimes "develops" itself into Romanism. This is not development: it is reaction. Now, either Pre-Raphaelitism has a peculiar doctrine, or it has not. If it has a peculiar doctrine, in what respect is that doctrine exemplified in the present work of Millais, and *not* exemplified in the work of Landseer and Frith? And if Pre-Raphaelitism has no peculiar doctrine at all,—what is it?

There are states of the public mind which produce artistic results at particular times which, for lack of the necessary heat and excitement, no subsequent epoch can ever engender. And in these days we live intellectually so fast that such epochs occur

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every twenty years. They leave their mark in some work of inimitable art, never again to be produced by the intelligence of man. Marmion, Ivanhoe, Faust, Don Juan, Jocelyn, In Memoriam, Vanity Fair, are not to be written twice. And I could name as many pictures which are not to be painted twice, but in this place it is only necessary to point to Hunt's "Finding of the Saviour in the Temple," as the culminating and representative Pre-Raphaelite figure picture, and Brett's "Val d'Aosta" as the culminating and representative Pre-Raphaelite landscape. Those pictures had the qualities, *and the defects*, of the sect. There could be no question about how those works ought to be classed; they stood as visibly distinct from other forms of art as soldiers in full uniform do from a crowd of civilians.

But since then, Pre-Raphaelitism, having produced the one or two representative works in which it seems to be a law of nature that each new thought shall embody itself, is losing its individuality, and melting into other art as an iceberg drifting southwards slowly melts and loses itself in the warm seas that there surround it. It will exist still, as water exists mingled with other water; but it will be no longer a definite, visible, isolated power.

Force is not lost, but it becomes untraceable when diffused, and is only recognizable by us when concentrated, or at its source. Pre-Raphaelitism has been unquestionably a force—a very great force—and its effects, though it may cease to exist, will be lasting. It was a strong and beneficial reaction from indolent synthesis to laborious analysis, and from mental inactivity to new thought and emotion—a great sharpening of the sight and rousing of the intellect, and even a fresh stimulus to the feelings. The irresistible pendulum swung then towards analysis and thought; it is now swinging back towards synthesis and manual power. Such reactions take place in the private lives of individual artists. They try hard for synthesis and unity, then find the details weak, and give themselves up to analysis; after that, they perceive, shortly, an alarming lack of unity, and so swing back to synthesis.

The representative of the most recent tendency is Mr. Whistler. Of his work as an etcher, I shall have to speak at length before long. As a painter, he has the rare faculty of *true* oil-sketching, selecting, with certainty, the most essential truths. Mr. Whistler's merits may be best expressed in this

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way:—Given a canvas, so many feet square, and so many hours to cover it in, Mr. Whistler will put more truths, and truths of greater importance, upon that canvas, in the given time, than most of his contemporaries. Such a faculty is of the utmost value to a landscape-painter, on account of the rapid changes of vegetation.[1] Mr. Whistler seems insensible to beauty, which is a grievous defect in any artist; but his work is redeemed from vulgarity by strange sensitiveness to colour and character. It is audacious, almost impudent, in manner; but it is not affected, though it looks so at first, and even its audacity is based on directness and simplicity of purpose.

Nature is perpetually breaking bounds. We hedge thought round with formulas; and, in a few years, being too narrow, they are broken before we are aware of it. The Pre-Raphaelite boundaries exist no longer. "Even Pre-Raphaelitism," says Mr. Ruskin, "is degenerating and forgetting the principle with which it set out—that nobility of subject is a main thing in painting; nay, the Pre-Raphaelites are forgetting even conscientiousness of workmanship." Still we owe them the acknowledgment that they taught us, at a time when we needed the lesson, that nature repays every new analysis, and that art may be grave and thoughtful.—1864.

NOTE.

The principle that "nobility of subject is a main thing in painting" finds little to support it in the previous history of the art. Many of the very finest pictures by masters of former centuries have had for their subjects the most commonplace incidents of life, and many of the best works by contemporary artists go to prove that if a subject is *pictorial* it need not deeply exercise the intellect.

[1] No summer landscape can be painted from nature if it takes more than a month, no spring or autumn landscape if it takes more than a fortnight. I am disposed to believe now that the most precious results of landscape-painting are frank and genuine colour sketches done from nature at high speed. Anything further must be done in the studio, and it is doubtful whether the studio elaboration is in all cases worth the rough note from nature.

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This theory about nobility of subject was not based upon experience, but on a desire to make experiments, a feeling which might be verbally expressed as follows:—"Hitherto, painters have very frequently wasted their skill upon trifling or vulgar subjects; we will reserve ours for great ones, and see whether by this means we may not leave a deeper impression on the public mind." The attempt was attended by partial success, but it sometimes happened that the attention to subject weakened the pictorial arrangement of the work. It was a literary and not an artistic notion, and it is a good and not a bad sign of the progress of the modern schools in the direction of real art, that this idea is now almost entirely abandoned. What the subject of a picture may be matters exceedingly little if only it is *pictorial*, and if the subject is not pictorial, then the painter had no business with it. The old artists knew this, and troubled themselves very little about nobility of subject, but were generally careful to see that the material they painted would come as they wanted it, in form, colour, light-and-shade, and composition.

Pre-Raphaelitism was an intellectual and scientific movement rather than an artistic one, and as art is better understood and more valued on its own account there will be less risk of these disturbances from without.—1873.

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XIV.

THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT.

THE following slight notes on a very deep and subtle subject have no pretension to exhaust it, or even to get quite to the bottom of it. Just after writing them I perceive already that more things might have been said, and even these few things better said. Still, such observations as these, though somewhat baldly set down, may have a certain utility in times when there is more external interest in art than inward sympathy with the spirit of it. If once the spirit of art were fully entered into, a true understanding of it would ultimately follow; but the erudition of criticism is in vain, if we have not that inward sympathy. How rare this is I hardly like to say positively, for it may be more frequent among unknown lovers of art than I know of, or at present imagine. But amongst known writers it is indeed very rare. Robert Browning thoroughly enters into the artistic mind, and sees it from the inside; but no other English poet ever did that. And of prose writers Thackeray understood artists. These two are on the inside; Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, and their predecessors, on the outside only.

1. *As to Aristocracy.*—The spirit of aristocracy would seem to have this in common with art, that it loves refinement and grace. The fine art of an aristocracy is its good behaviour; and the perfect aristocrat, with his grand air and fine manner, has always been a favourite with the best figure-painters. But to conclude that between art and aristocracy there is anything more than an occasional sympathy would be erroneous. Art is not necessary to an aristocracy, as such, the only arts

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which really serve it being family portraiture and the degree of architecture, scarcely deserving the name of a fine art, which suffices to distinguish the house of the great landowner.

There is true and intimate sympathy between aristocracies and established military and ecclesiastical hierarchies, true and intimate antipathy between aristocracies and dissent in politics and religion; but between the spirit of art and the spirit of aristocracy there is coolness, and that coolness neither writing nor lecturing is likely to overcome.

But then, on the other hand, art is not particularly democratic. Artists, if they find little to appeal to in the richest class, find still less in those poorer classes whose entire energy is absorbed in the struggle for daily bread. It is true that the French republicans have usually, even in the midst of the utmost national excitement, found leisure to care for the protection and encouragement of art; but this is less a republican than a national sentiment. It is an accepted creed in the minds of all Frenchmen that their country has conquered, and must maintain, the first place in two things—war and art; nor could any popular government altogether refuse to employ artists and keep up picture galleries. Even Louis Philippe, who shared and represented the bourgeois feeling, spent money on pictures for Versailles, though these were generally bad ones; and the present Government cherishes art as much as its predecessors did.

Yet, though art be neither aristocratic nor democratic, it is worthy of remark that whenever the artistic spirit develops itself, it effaces, between the persons possessing it, the distinctions of rank. A man of rank, endowed with artistic perceptions, is drawn towards all true artists by a feeling of confraternity. It has been observed even of photography, that it affords a common ground on which men of all classes fraternize. This is still more true of painting, probably because painting cultivates the feelings so much more, and therefore awakens subtler sympathies. Much has been written by Thackeray and other novelists about the narrow contempt with which society regards art and artists. The truth is, that so long as people of station are ignorant of art, they do undoubtedly hold its professors in slight esteem, because the Fine Arts can only influence by sympathy, never by force. But on the other hand, it is equally true that when rich men are endowed with

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the faculties which apprehend art, they always respect good artists, and show that they value their friendship.

2. *As to the Bourgeois Spirit.*—The state of mind in which our middle classes and the French bourgeois live, is unfavourable to art in many ways. Competence and comfort and cleanliness are very good and pleasant and desirable, and it is wonderful with how little money a managing couple in the middle classes will procure those blessings; but when they are made the only aims of life, they bring on an incredible pettiness of soul. I never met with any thoroughly bourgeois mind which had the least understanding of art. If, for example, a mayor and common council, composed of this class of people, have to deliberate about the destruction of some grand relic of the Middle Ages, you may *perhaps* find some one man amongst them who is superior enough to think that the object ought to be preserved for its historical or antiquarian interest, but you would not be likely to find anyone to suggest its preservation on purely artistic grounds; and if you tried to explain its artistic value to such people, you would waste your explanation. The cardinal bourgeois virtues of tidiness and decency and order are always likely to be offended by the grandeur of the high artistic spirit. For example, a mutilated antique is not exactly what the bourgeois mind would care to have in its parlour.

Much of the Bohemianism we find amongst artists is due to their instinctive revolt from middle-class narrowness. The artists lose a great deal, no doubt, by yielding so far to this repulsion, because there are virtues conspicuous in the middle class which all men ought to strive for, and which, when faithfully practised, add very greatly to human happiness in every condition of life. The bourgeois often has his revenge and triumph in the ruin and wretchedness consequent on the careless, irregular ways of Bohemianism; but the narrow prudence which hates ideas, scorns beauty, and regulates everything with reference to the lowest standard of utility, is quite incompatible with artistic achievement; and not only that, but it even incapacitates men for comprehending such achievement.

3. *As to Religion.*—The Fine Arts illustrate religion willingly, because it affords good subjects, and there is nothing in the artistic spirit in any way incompatible with the purest spirit of devotion; indeed, art draws us continually towards a state of

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mind akin to the devotional, by requiring us to spend our time in the conscious contemplation of the work of the Supreme Artist. Still, it is quite certain that there exists an opposition between art, which takes *pleasure* in God's work, and all those various forms of religious fanaticism which condemn pleasure as sinful. The healthiest temper of art is to rejoice in the sight of all visible beauty, fully, heartily, and exquisitely; the temper of religious fanaticism is to turn away from all earthly loveliness, and to mortify the desire of the eyes. Roman Catholic piety appears to find a certain utility in art, for it buys much; but it seems to like bad art just as well as good, and even to have a decided taste for certain kinds of foppery —as in the curling of saints' hair; or tawdriness—as in the tinsel on their garments—which true art disdains. Our own most earnest Protestants care very little for art; if they buy an engraving now and then, it is not for any artistic quality, but for the subject, as connected with their faith; or if it be secular, for its interest as a portraiture of some great man they admire,—some Cromwell, or Wellington, or Havelock. The reason seems to be that religious enthusiasm is always so ready to be kindled, so ready to illuminate and exalt everything it loves with its own internal light, that it does not care whether the work of art be good if it only have the religious spirit, or some plausible manufactured imitation of it; and it is surprising what a very poor mockery of it suffices. The customs of society in matters of outward observance, to which many sceptics find it expedient to conform, make it difficult to ascertain with precision what are or have been the real convictions of great artists, but amongst recent ones we may note that Haydon was an extremely religious man, who prayed almost literally without ceasing, whilst Turner was a sceptic. Thomas Seddon, on the other hand, was eminently pious, at least during his labours in the East, but then the artistic spirit is just what is absent from his works. Love of the sacred ground, reverence for the fact, earnestness, patient industry, keenness of sight, delicate skill of hand, all these he had, and exercised most conscientiously, most bravely, but the spirit of *art* he had *not*. Of living men it is better not to speak; it is useless to mention those who are religious without naming others who are not, and it would be wrong to expose these latter to public odium on account of opinions which can only be

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known privately, and which in no wise injuriously affect their pictures.

4. *As to Morality.*—The general opinion about the morality of figure-painters is this: Common sense argues that it is not probable that men can pass a great portion of their time in the study of the female form, without undergoing temptations which human nature is seldom insensible enough, or resolute enough, to resist. It may, however, be observed, without claiming immaculate purity of life for all these artists, that the naked figure loses, when seen habitually, and for purposes of serious study, much of that disturbing influence over the senses which a beautiful woman, unclothed, would, in other circumstances, generally exercise. And it is only fair to say that artists, as a class, are not more immoral than other men. Young officers, young attorneys, young cotton manufacturers, have, as a general rule, little right to reproach young painters with licentiousness.

But it is not so much with morality of life that we are here concerned, as with the morality of the artistic spirit itself. The truth is that art, as such, has nothing to do with either morality or immorality; it illustrates both with equal artistic satisfaction, provided that the quality of the material be to its mind. The leaning towards sensual subjects evinced by Gérôme, for instance, is, we are convinced, due far more to artistic predilections for certain qualities of line and modelling, best found in such subjects, than to prurience of feeling. When the artistic spirit is powerful, and has predilections of this kind, it is apt to overrule all other considerations. The spectator who does not share this spirit, sees immorality where none was intended, and, as he sees nothing else, imagines that the work was produced only for immoral purposes. On the other hand, the artist, who was aiming at some purely artistic triumph, some masterly feat of drawing and arrangement of forms, and who selected the immoral subject because it so precisely furnished the excuse for, and called for the display of, those subleties of his craft, thinks no more about the immoral conduct of his figures than a girl thinks of the sensual behaviour of the flowers she gathers in her garden. There have been examples, no doubt, of artists endowed with the true faculty, who had, notwithstanding, religious convictions powerful enough to enable them to withstand these artistic

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temptations, but such men are rare, and they are not the greatest painters. It is the nature of art to give to artistic considerations such importance that they gradually come to outweigh all others. I remember taking part in a discussion in a French *atelier*, as to the merits of a certain modern picture. The subject was most immoral, but the work had valuable artistic qualities, and it was on these qualities alone that the discussion turned. The disputants were insensible to the *apparent* subject, which, as they all knew, was only a pretext; their entire attention was occupied by the more or less successful artistic achievement which was the real purpose of the painter.

5. *As to the Military Spirit.*—Artists like soldiers, as they like priests, for their costume and action. But the military and ecclesiastical costumes have both grievously declined in artistic interest since the Middle Ages. Golden cope and jewelled mitre were nobler to look upon than wig and lawn sleeves; armour of steel inlaid with silver and gold was better worth painting than padded coatee or strapped pantaloons. Horace Vernet loved modern military tailoring, however, and knew the craft down to every braid and button. But are the pictures of Vernet due to the artistic or the military spirit? Is he not rather a soldier using paint for military purposes than a painter using soldiers for artistic ends? He had a wonderful memory, but of the kind which distinguishes good generals; he remembered men, and uniforms, and military combinations. He drew very cleverly, and coloured brightly and plausibly; yet who goes to Vernet's works for their artistic qualities?

When greater artists have painted battles, it has usually been either for the action of the naked figure, to display which they purposely stripped the combatants, or for the costume of some more picturesque time or nation; not from any definitely military spirit. A good many artists, too, have painted battles from a love of horror and slaughter, which it would be grievous injustice to all noble soldiers to call *their* spirit. A high-minded soldier walks through blood whither duty commands him, but he does not wallow in it.

6. *As to the Commercial Spirit.*—What first strikes us here is the obvious reflection that commerce is the best and kindest helper and friend of the Fine Arts, and yet that the spirit of commerce is directly opposed to the spirit of art.

In recognizing this opposition, we by no means intend to

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detract from the utility of the commercial spirit, or to imply any wish to substitute for it the artistic feeling generally. It is the object of commerce to increase wealth, and the result of the general spread of the commercial spirit in a country is the augmentation of the national power and resources. If it were to become the general custom of all persons having capital enough to afford them perfect leisure, to devote their whole time to the study of the Fine Arts, not only would the country become so enfeebled both in money and population as to be incapable of maintaining its independence, but even the Fine Arts themselves would be ruined by the diminution of that wealth, a great abundance of which is absolutely necessary to their support.

Men of business, whose primary object is gain, have usually some difficulty in appreciating the truest artists, with whom gain is the secondary and art the first object. Either they look upon the Fine Arts as a trade, or else, perceiving that artists are often indifferent to their pecuniary interests, they consider them foolish children, who cannot discern what is best to be done. No doubt a commercial man who sets aside his pecuniary interest for an idea, disobeys and sets aside, in so doing, the commercial principle. Some tradesmen do this knowingly from time to time, as, for instance, it now and then happens that a publisher issues a book by which he is aware that he is likely to be a loser, merely because he thinks that the work ought not to be stifled. Or, again, a manufacturer occasionally tries a new invention less in the hope that it will pay than from a desire to give ingenuity a fair chance. Men who do these things often render great services to humanity, but they are not likely to get much reputation for wisdom in any society which recognizes profit as the measure of intelligence.

Now, the true artist outrages the commercial spirit habitually. To begin with, his choice of art at all as a means of living is in itself contrary to the commercial principle, because art is as a profession too precarious to be embraced by anyone not prepared to endure poverty contentedly, and contentment with poverty is an idea foreign to the commercial mind, which is accustomed to consider it as the proof of incapacity. In nine cases out of ten art is a bad investment of ability, and people who make bad investments seldom enjoy high credit for practical sense. But not only in the selection of his profession

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does an artist outrage the commercial spirit; he often outrages it still more in the way he follows his art. Instead of carefully studying the market and providing what the public best likes, original artists are apt to make themselves martyrs to their artistic predilections. A successful tradesman said to me one day, "In business we provide what sells best; that is our affair. Whether a pattern is artistic or not does not concern us; we encourage bad art if our customers prefer it; and the shopkeeper who proceeds on any other principle is pretty sure to ruin himself." When you buy a carpet or a wall paper and the shopman tells you that the design is beautiful, what he means is that it is in fashion; and a thing gets into fashion as soon as everybody thinks everybody else approves of it. The temper of a real artist is not this shopman's pliant mood; it is more like the temper of William Wordsworth. He offers what he believes to be the worthiest thing that he is capable of doing, whether anybody likes it or not; and he will not condescend to offer anything less worthy because the people like it better. This Wordsworthian condition of mind looks self-opinionated, conceited; would it not be more graceful to yield the point, conform to precedent, defer to the general opinion? And artists, so far as they approach to this state, are liable to be accused of vanity, which is the only explanation that the world can find for such strange, unaccountable ways.

A better explanation, however, does not seem unattainable. Original men appear to be endowed with an almost ungovernable desire to find an outlet for their originality; and it would be as well if, instead of setting down originality as folly, we were to give Heaven credit for understanding the best interests of humanity when it accompanied every good gift with the condition that the possessor should be uneasy till he had set it forth. All artists, poets, inventors, thinkers, are compelled to set forth their gifts. And this is the condition of genuineness in art-work. Original art is not only the best, it is the only art which has any interest. The simple expression of a real gift, however humble, is better than the most learned imitation of other men's labour. Nor is it vanity which makes men try to express lesser talents; vanity would rather suggest the more ambitious notion of rivalling great men on their own ground. William Hunt, not being a vain man, became what we all know; had nature added vanity to his composition, he would

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never have painted such simple subjects. His life was a bright triumph of that combination of humility with self-reliance which distinguishes the true artist.

It follows that since a painter cannot without danger pay much attention to the question of profit, he is obliged, if he would be happy, to learn the philosophy preached by so many ancient sages, and enforced by the authority of no less a teacher than the Head of Christianity, that poverty has its own blessings and compensations, and that it is, in some important respects, a better condition than wealth. This philosophy, wild as it may seem to the worldly, has an immense attraction for noble minds; the more so that it allows of a more cheerful view of human life generally. If happiness is attainable by the poor, we may hope that a good many more or less completely attain to it. But if on the other hand happiness cannot possibly be procured for less than two thousand pounds a year, many human beings are for ever debarred from it. It seems so glorious for a human being to bear bravely the suffering and contempt which poverty brings, so enviable to have found the secret of an inward happiness strong enough to dwell serenely in the midst of privation, that heroic spirits are one and all in love with this lofty creed. A true artist will eat bread and drink water for his art; and this temper, able to be happy almost without money, often makes him careless of it when it comes: if he gets any, he is apt to be foolishly generous with it, especially to brother artists who are in want. This characteristic of artists tends, however, to diminish as their place in general society is better recognized. Living more in the world than they used to do and less in solitude or in Bohemia, they are learning a new virtue and a new vice—provident habits and polite selfishness. And as the Philistines only practise Christianity so far as it is consistent with a very high degree of physical comfort, the artist who, having two coats, was always ready to give one of them, if not *both*, to his less fortunate brother, is now to be sought rather in the taverns of disreputable Bohemia than in the pillared streets of the West End.

7. *As to the Industrial Spirit.*—The industrial principle is to find out, first, how to make a thing, and then to produce that identical thing in the utmost possible quantities and at the lowest possible rate for ever and ever.

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The artistic principle is that when once a thing has been perfectly well done, there is little or no use in trying to do it again. If, for instance, a water-colour painter felt inclined to paint birds' nests, he would very likely be deterred from attempting them by the reflection that Hunt had done them so well. An industrial mind would endeavour to find out means of producing unlimited copies of Hunt's nests in colour.

This is one reason the more why good artists are almost always new. If a man has the artistic spirit, he will either seek unusual material in nature; or if he appears to accept the old material, he will make it new by finding unthought-of elements and suggestions in it.

Artists, however, occasionally share the industrial spirit to a certain extent; but when they do, it degrades them exactly in proportion to its degree. It would be easy to mention painters, who, to save time and earn money, have got more or less into habits of manufacture, producing many works which are in reality only modifications of one. This gives great apparent manual facility, because such works are, in consequence of their frequent repetition, produced with great certainty, whereas in art of a higher order every new work is an untried and somewhat hazardous experiment.

Of course the industrial principle is right in industrial business, where indeed it is the only safe or possible principle. Nothing can be more remote from my intention than to express anything but the most respectful admiration for the wise maxims which commerce and industry must ever apply if they would prosper. The magnificent results achieved by faithful obedience to these principles prove that they are sound and in harmony with natural law. All I say is, that commercial and industrial wisdom is not applicable to the Fine Arts, nor can the Fine Arts be either effectively advanced or heartily enjoyed by a people which has *only* that wisdom.

In the ways of labour in an artist's life, violations of industrial principles are frequent. Good artists are always laborious, but they are seldom steadily and regularly laborious. "When you begin to tire of your work," said Leslie, "leave off; otherwise you will probably injure it. You will certainly injure yourself." Leslie was quite right in speaking so to young artists; but only fancy a cotton manufacturer saying

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to his hands, "When you begin to tire of your work, leave off!" The hard industrial law requires the steadiness of a steam-engine from its servants; but then it only requires the *same sort of work* that steam-engines may do—incessant repetition of identically similar acts. The exigencies of Fine Art are far heavier, not merely because it requires to some extent the use of the mind, but still more because it demands the unflagging expenditure of *feeling;* and the feelings, more than any other of our faculties, are subject to sudden and unaccountable exhaustion. Fine Art work is useless unless you are in the vein, and neither picture nor poem can go on with the unrelaxing steadiness displayed in the weaving of a piece of cotton cloth. But a prudent artist, knowing this, will contrive to have easier artistic work at hand for his more torpid hours. If he cannot paint passionately to-day, he may yet be able to study accurately, and the picture may be laid aside for some careful drawing done from nature for information alone. The wise rule is never to force yourself to work you are momentarily unfit for, only do *something*, if it be but to make a note in your memorandum book.

8. *As to the Intellectual Spirit.*—It is a tendency of the present age to exalt the intellectual at the expense of the perceptive and imaginative faculties. For example, if, in speaking of artists, I happen to say that A. was intellectual and B. not, nine readers out of ten would conclude that I was praising A. and putting B. down; whereas I might say that with perfect truth and all the time reverence B. as a man of the rarest order of soul, whilst I considered A. no better than a good many of us. An attorney is generally more intellectual than a saint, an average artillery officer is likely to be more intellectual than Garibaldi, any tolerably good critic may be more intellectual than the immortal colourists. The art of painting does not proceed so much by intelligence as by sight, and feeling, and invention. Painters are often curiously feeble in their reasonings about art, and the best painters are commonly the worst reasoners. Not that their theories of art are without value; on the contrary, no art-theories are so valuable as theirs if only we translate them into more philosophical language, which may be easily done by taking into account their special points of view. The unfeigned contempt which almost all artists feel for critics—even for the best of them—is partly

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explicable by the fact that the artistic spirit can neither appreciate nor follow intellectual methods.

The elevation of *scholarship*, or quantity of traditional acquisition, above *faculty* or mental flexibility and force, which has always hitherto been prevalent in society, is one of those inevitable pieces of injustice which it is useless to combat directly, but which, we may reasonably hope, will yield in due time to the gradual influences of culture. The more serious attention given in these days to the Fine Arts, and the fact that pedantry is now considered bad taste, are hopeful indications. True art, which requires free and healthy faculties, is opposed to pedantry, which crushes the soul under a burden.

9. *The Principle of Art for Art.*—A pernicious principle in one way, that it tends to deprive painting of much of its influence over the public by directing its efforts to aims in which the public cannot possibly take any interest, and yet a principle which has always had great weight with artists, which regulates the admission of pictures to exhibitions, and has more influence than any other consideration in determining the rank which an artist's name must ultimately hold in the catalogue of masters. Here is a recent example. Many readers will remember a picture by Mr. Whistler, called "The Woman in White." The work was unpleasant, and, to those who did not see the technical problem which it attempted to solve, most uninteresting; nevertheless it did Mr. Whistler's name good amongst persons conversant with art, because it proved, on his part, at least an intelligent interest in his profession. The difficulty he proposed to wrestle with was that of relieving white upon white; there was some presumption in the essay, but it is quite in the artistic spirit to make such attempts. The difficulty of painting white objects may be to some extent understood by the unprofessional reader in this way. Nature always lets us see that a white object is white, even when, from its situation, it is darker than some coloured objects. Nature can paint *dark whites;* but when painters try to paint dark whites, they generally end by producing light greys, or dirty, pale, yellowish browns. The difficulty is to paint a dark colour which shall obviously stand for white *and look perfectly pure;* and this difficulty is quite infinite, because to find one tint is not enough. Nature has not only one dark white, she

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has millions of various hues, produced by reflected colour, which all in their own place, and under their own peculiar conditions, stand for white.

It will often be found that pictures by good painters which seem to have no subject worth representing, are serious endeavours to master some peculiar artistic difficulty; and, when successful, these solutions of technical problems are often highly valuable and interesting in a certain sense. The Lorrain's great problem evidently was to produce something which, by careful management, might be made to look rather like the sun; and it is generally understood that he resolved that problem so far as its immense difficulty admits of a solution. The great interest of painting as a practical pursuit is, that its difficulties are so infinite, that every new artist may find some untried one to grapple with, and reasonably indulge the hope that, if he succeeds, that conquest will give him a place in the history of art development. No age has been more fertile in triumphs of this kind than our own, and there is no surer sign of the vigour of a school than the healthy disposition to seek for new conquests. So long as painters are content to do what has only been done before, they *always* do less than their predecessors.

And this principle, of art for art, makes all things which deserve to be painted interesting; the question is less whether the thing is of the rarest and noblest order of beauty than what we can make of it. For instance, in landscape the grand and rare effects are, considered as natural effects, by far the most interesting; but looking at nature with strict reference to art, it must be admitted that the problem of the right management of a few delicate greys in some simple every-day effect, is quite as deep and curious. I know a very intelligent amateur who has devoted years to the study of common sunshine. Indeed, it may safely be asserted that any artist or critic who has mastered the facts of appearance in any common object under common effects, knows much.

Many painters, from an insufficient apprehension of the importance of merely artistic qualities, have deceived themselves in the hope that by painting more learned and thoughtful pictures, or pictures of rarer and more wonderful subjects, or pictures of more accurate veracity than their contemporaries, they might thereby achieve high artistic rank. For example,

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we find many historical painters, especially in Germany, who are thoughtful and philosophical to such a degree, that they lose the healthy sensuous relish for beautiful colour and fair form which is absolutely indispensable to a good painter; and we have landscape-painters, of whom the well-known traveller, Mr. Atkinson, is an instance, who endeavour to acquire artistic renown by seeking some remote ground hitherto unoccupied; and we have young artists who spare no pains to secure veracity. Now, all these things are good things, and there lies the danger, for if they were evidently valueless, no sensible man would aim at them. Thought is good, novelty is good, veracity is good; but, alas! they cannot of themselves produce *art*. I could easily name fine pictures, priceless treasures, in which there is no thought, in which there never was any novelty, and whose veracity, both as to facts of history and facts of science, is so unreliable, that any well-informed critic could point out falsities and impossibilities by the dozen. Why, then, are such works treasures? Because, with all their faults, they have *quality*. The men who painted them may not have been either thinkers, or travellers, or historians, or men of science, but they were *artists*. You or I may know more, think more, observe more, but somehow, with all our efforts, we cannot paint so.

The world, notwithstanding its ignorance of art, sees this better than some critics and connoisseurs do, but, seeing it, draws conclusions of its own. The world sees that painting is a pursuit in which thought, scholarship, information, go for little; whereas a strange, unaccountable talent, working in obscure ways (a special talent as it seems to outsiders, though in reality it results from a high harmony of physical and mental endowments), achieves the only results worth having. And the world wisely hesitates before entering the arena of art. Here is a field in which neither birth nor condition is of any use, and wealth itself of exceedingly little; here faculty alone avails, and a kind of faculty so subtle and peculiar, so difficult to estimate before years have been spent in developing it, or wasted in the vain attempt to develop it where it does not exist, that men having already any solid advantages in life may well pause before they stake them on such a hazard.

It remains only to consider whether, in a national sense, it is wise to assist in the spread of the artistic spirit. The general

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opinion has concluded that it *is*. Our schools of design, our art-exhibitions, the great quantity of our printed art-criticism, all urge the country towards an art epoch, which promises ultimately to be brilliant, for we have both the wealth and the talent necessary for such a time. But it may be doubted whether the national mind has turned to art from the pure love for it. We discovered that, for want of artistic counsel and help, we were spending our money badly every time we tried either to build a public building, or weave a carpet, or colour a ribbon. We found out that the French managed these things better, and with less outlay got handsomer results, and it appeared that this superiority was due to their artistic education. So we said, Let us study Raphael that we may sell ribbons. This was not a very promising temper to start with; we were laughed at for our awkwardness, and we did not like to be laughed at, so we resolved to silence derision by the acquisition of art skill. Nevertheless, in spite of the commercial spirit of this beginning, we are generally tending art-wards, and the problem before us is whether this artistic infusion will not injuriously affect the traditional character of Englishmen. It will modify it very considerably, rely upon that. There is a difference between minds which are artistic and minds which are not, so strong and decided, that nobody can question the influence of art upon character. Not that art always influences in the same way; various itself, it produces varied effects. But it always alters our habitual estimates of things and men; it alters our ways of valuing things. A child in a library values those books most which have gilt edges; a book collector prizes the rarest editions; but a lover of reading for its own sake neither cares for gilt edges nor rare editions, only for the excellence of the matter and the accuracy of the text. So is our value for men and nature affected by the artistic spirit. To it, vulgar show is the gilt-edged book; the extraordinary is the rare edition; what it values is often very humble and poor to eyes that cannot read it. It can see majesty and dignity in many a poor labourer; it can detect meanness under the mantle of an emperor; it can recognize grandeur in a narrow house, and pettiness in the palace of a thousand chambers.—1865.

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XV.

THE PLACE OF LANDSCAPE-PAINTING AMONGST THE FINE ARTS.

LANDSCAPE-PAINTERS are very generally aware that there exist amongst figure-painters and in society opinions relative to landscape art which tend to assign it a very inferior position. These opinions are not without grounds; they are founded on reasons which deserve consideration; but they fail to take into account other reasons of equal weight, which would, if fairly heard, have the effect of at least partially counterbalancing them. I therefore invite the reader's attention to the whole question, and beg him to enter with me into a fair examination of it, without hoping to settle definitely either this or any other disputed point about art, for it is idle to expect perfect harmony of opinion on these matters; we may still benefit ourselves by discussing such questions as this, since they involve the recognition of truths which we are always apt to lose sight of.

Amongst figure-painters success in landscape-painting is usually held in slight estimation as an artistic achievement, from the idea that it is so easy that no very great credit is due to mastery in it. The truth on which this opinion is founded is that accurate drawing is not necessary in landscape, and that scarcely any painter who confined his studies to that branch of the profession has ever been able to draw accurately. "In England," says Mr. Armitage, "nobody knows what drawing is."[1] Without going quite so far as Mr. Armitage, we may safely admit that learned drawing, or what Mr.

[1] Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Academy Commission. Question 5,051.

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Ford Madox Brown would call the pedantry of drawing, is much rarer in England than in France. But it is a fact very much to our present purpose that the French, who so rigorously exact this kind of drawing from their historical painters, scarcely so much as take it into consideration as one of the minor points in a landscape-painter. The favourite landscape-painter amongst artists in France, the one whose reputation has been made by the admiration of artists, Corot, can scarcely draw better than a school-girl. Our own Turner was not an accurate draughtsman, but he was a *good* one. The distinction which figure-painters fail to observe in their criticisms of landscape art is this one between quality and accuracy. The necessities of pictorial composition make accuracy impossible for all but the most rigidly topographic landscape-painter. When Titian or Paul Veronese wants a form to support another, he may make one figure bend and still draw it well; but when Turner needs the same thing in a mountain composition, he has to alter the main lines of the whole scene, and consequently every detail within them, and as he must do this every time he lays pencil to paper he becomes habitually inaccurate. But quality may be sought for and attained notwithstanding this inaccuracy. What I mean by quality of drawing in landscape is its truth to the *nature* of the thing represented. Perfectly accurate drawing would have this, of course, for it would be included in the merit of accuracy; but much topographic exactitude may be reached with very low quality indeed. The popular views of Switzerland, that so many tourists have such an odd fancy for carrying away in their portmanteaus as reminiscences of the country, are more truthful as to accuracy than Turner's, but in quality of drawing they are beneath contempt.

The next question is, whether this quality is easy of attainment. It means, as I have said, the power of representing the nature of things; their abstract, innermost nature. For example, cloud must look like cloud, oak-tree like oak, granite like granite; and in mountain drawing the most expressive markings must be instinctively selected. In all things the kind of touch and workmanship must be found which will most truly render the nature of the object. An accurate outline, even accurate modelling, would often be easier of attainment than the craft which can accomplish this.

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I find on examining the works of great landscape-painters that quality of this kind, in drawing and colour, has come to be their chief aim in middle life. They may try to draw accurately at first, but they usually discover, before the age of thirty, that to be accurate is of little artistic use in comparison with that far deeper kind of truth which for want of a special word we have to call quality. Turner let many of his more solid merits melt away from his canvases in the hope of reaching some exquisite results of this kind, and ultimately his aspirations ended in utter shapelessness. Constable in another way tried for quality; and if he failed in form, Troyon and the Bonheurs understood his aims and profited by his example.

"If landscape-painters could draw," say historical painters, "they could draw the figure. Now we see that every time they attempt a figure they make things no better than puppets or dolls dressed as peasants, therefore we decline to consider them draughtsmen." One step more, and it is easy to refuse even the title of artist to a landscape-painter. If you consider Academic drawing *everything*, as Ingres does; if you consider that without accurate drawing there can be no serious art, as Mr. Armitage does, then you can scarcely look upon landscape-painters as artists in the serious sense at all.

The difficulty of arguing this point on my side of it is, that whilst the figure-painter appeals to a merit easily ascertainable, I appeal to a merit which cannot be proved to the satisfaction of any but competent judges; and for them all such proof is needless. *They* know that right abstraction is rare and difficult. All landscape-painters find that to abstract in such a manner as to explain in every touch the essential nature of the object, requires infinite care and study. But who shall judge of the relative merit of *different* abstractions? It is evident that no measuring by compasses will do this; for we admit that landscape abstraction does not profess accuracy of this kind. Relative merit can then only be determined by persons who have at the same time an intimate acquaintance with the kind of object represented, practical familiarity with the technical difficulties of the art, and a mind both philosophical enough to comprehend the nature of abstract ideas, and capacious enough to tolerate various interpretations. This last quality is perhaps the rarest of the critical endowments, because it requires us to have seen in nature all the facts which the united

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observation of the whole body of landscape-painters has been able to discover there, and still at the same time to be catholic enough to praise one man for seeing one order of truths, and another for seeing a quite different order.

Now it is hopeless to expect these critical requirements from anyone who in the least *despises* landscape art. If you perceive in anyone, whether painter or connoisseur, the slightest approach to superciliousness in speaking of landscape, you may rely upon it that he neither has acquired, nor ever can acquire, so long as he remains in that mood, any real knowledge of the subject. And the objection I have to make to the criticism of persons inclined to think little of landscape lies there, that they begin by despising it, and look upon the subject as unworthy their serious attention; consequently they are from the very beginning in an unteachable and unobservant frame of mind.

It is evident how seriously belief in the facility of landscape must detract from the consideration of landscape-painters amongst artists, for artists always esteem each other mainly by reference to a standard of technical difficulty. This is probably one reason why landscape-painters find Academic honours all but hopelessly unattainable by them. One of the most distinguished of living Academicians said to me, "The great charm of landscape-painting is that it is so delightfully easy," and I believe most other figure-painters share this impression. The feeling that they are no longer obliged to draw accurately when painting landscape backgrounds is to them a feeling of relief. They enjoy a liberty which has removed an irksome responsibility and restraint, and are little capable, in the full fruition of this novel pleasure, of estimating the real difficulties of an art which they take up occasionally in the spirit of relaxation. The public, too, is particularly kind and indulgent in its demands upon the landscape backgrounds of figure-painters. It expects nothing more than a slight sketch which shall surround the figures with not inharmonious colouring. No true colourist can give less than that, even in his most careless hours.

But *is* landscape easy? Let us consider what elements it is composed of, what materials it attempts to represent.

A landscape-painter has to encounter the difficulties of imitating the sky, the earth, vegetation, and water, and these

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difficulties are complicated and multiplied infinitely by *effect*, which, in landscape, utterly transfigures every object it touches, so that an object under one effect does not seem to be the same thing, has not even apparently the same *form*, as under another. It may also be observed that the difficulties of landscape-painting are most seriously increased by the evanescence of the appearances it attempts to represent. If the effect would *stay*, the art would be less difficult, though still very far from easy. But so soon as the landscape-painter desires to record any of those magnificent unities of Nature, when her scenery masses itself together in full synthesis, he must work from memory alone.

Has the reader ever actually *looked* at a cloud, or a tree, or a running brook, or a calm lake? Perhaps not, for the majority never *look* at these things; they like pleasant landscape, they benefit by its exquisite influences, sunshine, lovely colours, sweet sounds, and pure, refreshing air: all these they truly appreciate and value in their way, but they no more *study* them than an amorous boy studies the anatomy of the fair face he delights in. External nature is, to the mass of mankind, a source of sensuous refreshment, not a matter of laborious observation; it is passive pleasure and perpetual benefit. Happier than critic or painter, the rest of mankind need only enjoy what these have to investigate and remember.

But if the reader has ever looked at a cloud, can he believe that clouds are easy things to paint? Take a great, elaborate, well-developed cumulus, for example,—would not the modelling of it puzzle Ingres himself, and the unapproachable splendour of it defeat him? Could he, could anyone, remember the true detail of it faithfully enough? Could anyone draw it delicately enough?

Who ever really painted a field of the cloud vulgarly known as mares' tails,—those long films, delicate as the trains of comets, which wave with gentle curves across the sky? Who can remember a field of thirty thousand cirri so as to paint it truly? Hundreds of artists have attempted to render storms, but who ever gave the true evolution of the heavily-laden thunder-cloud? You who say that landscape is easy, paint for us the form and hue of those threatening messengers! There is modelling enough *there*, and there are strange gradations of lurid colour too.

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And the flames of sunset, dashing the blue lead colour of the clouds at the horizon with intense streaks of crimson fire, fainter as they rise towards the zenith, and fading over our heads in scarcely perceptible inward glowing; are *they* easy? Is it easy to get *that* light with *that* colour?

And the gradations in the exquisite open sky, so deep, so pure, so ever varying, by whom have they been quite rightly, quite unexceptionably wrought? By one or two early religious painters, it may be, but not in their full variety. Who can gradate quite truly an evening sky with intense gold at the horizon and cold blue at the zenith? Will there not generally occur some dubious or false passage between the gold and the blue? Skilful painters of draperies, are you perfectly confident that you can quite successfully resolve this particular little problem? And if you had mastered it, why, there are a million more such problems in reserve for you, *tous plus difficiles les uns que les autres.*

Mountains, too, are supposed to be easy. I may be excused for feeling sceptical on that point. I lived a few years under the shadow of Ben Cruachan, and carefully observed him under thousands of very different aspects, but it never occurred to me that that immense agglomeration of ever-changing, *yet always perfectly harmonious* detail, could by any possibility become easy to paint. Every separate aspect of that mountain would have cost the labour of months, and it did not last even *minutes*, only fractions of a minute. Who can carry in his memory for months the true relative colour and true apparent form of the hundred minor hills that boss his craggy sides? But if Cruachan and Shehallion are too easy, have we not the Alps on which to wreak our energies? If bosses of crag and heather are unworthy of us, the white waves and azure crevasses of a glacier may deserve our condescending attention. Why does not some famous painter of history deign to prove to us that glaciers are easy enough, after all, to men who have had the advantages of a sound Academical education?

The subject of foliage is sure to draw forth the usual reference to Titian's "Peter Martyr." On this, however, two observations may be made: the first, that all figure-painters are not necessarily Titians; the second, that his foliage, though the best in old art, is not nearly so good as his figures.

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Titian did not succeed as a landscape-painter, further than this, that he painted landscape backgrounds which, as such, were satisfactory, and suited his figures. They are partly naturalistic, but also to a great degree governed by a conventionalism of his own. But even if Titian *had* painted landscape as well as paint would permit, would the necessary inference be that landscape was easy, or even that it was easy for *all* figure-painters? That would be a poor compliment to Titian. Probably we, who consider landscape difficult, respect Titian more for what seems to us a very partial mastery in the art, than others do for what seems to them absolute success in it. With regard to the foliage in the backgrounds of modern figure-painters, it may be summarily divided into two classes: the careless and the careful. To the careless belongs *all* modern background foliage up to the second quarter of this century, and most of it since. To the careful belongs the work of Leslie, Mulready, Millais, and a few less celebrated men. Now Leslie, though everybody dislikes the chalkiness of his colour, was a real painter. He could paint an expression, but he could not paint a tree; there are some trees of his at South Kensington, which, though excusable in a painter of polite comedy, would not do credit to a professor of landscape. It is probable that Millais would paint a better tree now than when he attempted the willow in the Ophelia, or the blooming orchard that we all remember. Those efforts, though serious, and therefore most creditable (for how rare is such condescension on the part of a painter of genre!), failed on the side of hardness. The leafage was not like free, soft, natural leafage, with life and sap in its vessels; it was like artificial leaves carefully cut out of sheet metal painted green. The foliage and even the bough drawing of Mulready fail in another way. They attempt *massing*, but they are entirely conventional, and as examples for young landscape-painters no models could well be worse. His trees are bad examples, on account of his satisfaction with them; there is no sign of effort after better things. They are drawn with more refinement, perhaps, as to line, than Constable's, but there is a quality in Constable's work which all landscape-painters must appreciate,—the noble dissatisfaction which would rather even daub than draw, if in "drawing" is to be involved the sacrifice of moisture and mystery and freshness. Constable's trees are painted by a

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man who feelingly loved nature, and desired to express how nature affected him. Mulready's are either empty abstractions, or cold, though industrious, studies.

Not that an intelligent critic could, without reserve, say that anyone's foliage is "good." No painter hitherto has done more than express two or three of the chief qualities of trees. Foliage is so infinitely difficult that human craft always fails before it in some point, and always must.

In near leaf drawing no landscape-painter has hitherto particularly distinguished himself. A few figure-painters have introduced leaves well when they have paid attention to them; but they seldom give their natural relations as to position; they usually separate the leaves more than nature does, and avoid, to some considerable extent, the difficulties of foreshortened curves.

When you add to difficulties of drawing and colour those of illumination, you have a complication which only the greatest executants may hope to contend with. An accomplished master of the figure showed me several studies in which he had seriously attempted to paint near leaves in sunshine, all failures, and he knew it. The intensity of reflection and the brilliancy of transparency in sun-lighted leaves, all acting upon and through surfaces of such extremely varied and complex curvature, produce in the aggregate difficulties which no mortal hand may conquer.

Of water I hardly know how to speak, so little is popularly known of it. Even such a comparatively common and simple fact as the interruption of a reflection by a breeze is beyond the cognizance of many persons who concern themselves with the fine arts. I had a curious instance of ignorance of water phenomena one day when talking with a French art critic. I discovered that he was under the impression that an object could not be reflected in water unless the sun was behind the object; he actually believed that reflections and shadows were the same thing. A moment's observation on the side of any pond would have taught him a very different theory, but this little effort of observation is just what you cannot get people to give. The fact that breezes take all sorts of different *colours* is also not generally understood, a breeze being popularly supposed to be white, even by persons advanced enough to know that there are such things as breezes. So if any

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historical painter chooses to say that water is very easy, I scarcely know how to answer him, the word "water" not signifying the same thing to both of us.

To paint a lake surface rightly, if it is varied by breezes and calms, and semi-calms and demi-semi-calms (for there are such things, and they are often all visible at one time),—to paint such a lake surface, I say, with all the curves of its breeze outlines, and the truth of reflection in its little isolated bits of perfect mirror, and the ineffably light dimness of places that the faintest airs have breathed upon, and the million-rippled acres where the breeze is stronger,—to paint that vast and marvellous surface, so perfect in its finish, so exquisite in the phantasy of its design, so wide, so wonderful, and above all so evanescent, is a task to try the utmost skill of hand, the utmost power of memory, the utmost delicacy of sight ever reached by, or given to, the most finely organized of men!

And sea-waves,—what of them? Who can paint a wave? who can even draw one? Stanfield and Turner have given us two interpretations of waves which do indeed render some of the facts, and are full of honest intentions; but if you want difficulties, even the elementary ones are as yet unconquered.

Is there not an admission of the difficulty of landscape in the very desperation of the best landscape-painters? When Turner came to paint at last in his wild later way, that was due to a recklessness brought on by two causes: first, the impossibility of really painting the facts he desired to record; secondly, the uselessness of trying to make them intelligible to the common public. And Corot, too, is reckless of much that a less sensitive artist would strive for. When he gets the right relative tone on any part of his canvas, he dares not meddle with it, dares not put detail upon it, may lightly sketch a thin twig or two across it, but is far too prudent to attempt what we call "finish." For finish in landscape-painting is generally false, because true finish is so infinitely difficult. When a third-rate artist industriously dots over his trees with little regular lumps of paint, he calls *that* "finish." No sensitive painter could endure to do that; he would rather splash like Constable, daub like Daubigny, blur and rub like Corot, blot and wash like David Cox. All these men would have told you that they considered their methods quite inadequate to represent nature, but that landscape-painting was so difficult that

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they were forced to content themselves with anything that would even approach the kind of quality they desired.[1]

Those who most habitually undervalue landscape-painting for its inaccuracy are the very persons who least clearly understand what accurate drawing in landscape is and leads to. *It would lead to pure topography*, and there is little encouragement to draw landscape in that manner. A painter is an author, and likes to move his public, and topography moves nobody. And not only that, but topography, being the product of an artificial and rigidly self-conscious, self-governing state of mind, does not even satisfy the artist himself. If you draw an object freely and innocently as it appears to you, even setting aside all intention of composition, it will be quite wrong topographically. To get into a cool and accurate state you must reason with yourself, and say, "Every hill is half the height it looks, every curve looks twice as round as it is, every interesting feature is insignificant." You must disbelieve the evidence of your senses, divest yourself not only of the enthusiasm of the artist, but even of the common feelings of humanity; you must train yourself by patient labour and cautious self-denial to become a looking-glass. Are the backgrounds of the great historical painters models of this accuracy? And if they have it not, and can yet maintain a reputation as draughtsmen, why may not landscape-painters who are but equally far from such rigid exactitude, escape the reproach of bad drawing?

Historical painters are no doubt generally in the right when they consider themselves more highly trained than landscape artists. It is not because they are more industrious or more intelligent, but the figure, though not less difficult than the materials of landscape, affords a more convenient and regular training. Its modelling can be studied quietly under a manageable light day after day; its surface is not broken as tree masses are by leaves, and mountain masses by rocks and

[1] I ought to say that since writing "A Painter's Camp in the Highlands," in which (vol. ii. p. 374) I spoke somewhat severely of Constable, a great change has taken place in my views of him. Seeing much more in nature than I did then, I can better enter into the true spirit of his work. His execution still seems to me empirical; but I have learned to prefer intelligent experiments which prove original observation, even when they are only partially successful, to clever traditional handicraft. I have not space here to do Constable justice, but hope to do so fully on a future occasion.

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forests; it is not so full of unforeseen accidents; you know what to expect, and you find it; and, above all, when you are wrong, you readily perceive your error. Landscape, as usually pursued, affords no such steady and instructive training. Many clouds are as elaborate in form as a living model, but the model will stay for you, and the cloud not. Cloud-drawing, as training, is therefore what the figure would be if the students were only allowed to see nude figures marching past them, never for one instant still. Waves are even worse than clouds, mountains somewhat better, yet not so much better as would seem to persons who have not tried to paint them from nature; for a mountain never gives you time to study its modelling fairly. As for trees, the changes of light affect them even more than they do a solid substance, for the light gets *into* a tree amongst the leaves, and alters it continually from within as well as from without. Then, if you want to study leaves,—draw them on the bough, the light alters, the breeze moves them; bring them into the house, and they droop and fail out of their places. And for the first elementary study of mountains or foliage, what can you get comparable in point of practicable utility to a statue for the figure? The best model of mountain scenery in the world is probably that of Mont Blanc and its surrounding valleys, at Geneva; but a student of landscape could not procure such models, and if he could, they are only topographic sketches of the very rudest kind, lacking all those refinements that an artist looks for.

Again, the first training of a figure-painter is more useful, as we see; but, what is of still greater consequence to him as an artist, his practical work is more improving than landscape work. Landscapes are for the most part painted in the studio; they are *always* painted, even when in the presence of nature, to a large extent from memory. Painting from memory may exercise that faculty, but it adds nothing to the stock of acquired information. A figure-painter, working constantly more or less from models, painting even inanimate accessories from the actual objects, is always acquiring information, always training and maintaining his faculty of representing things, and that faculty is nothing less than the very foundation of pictorial power. So that figure-painters are likely to be better craftsmen than landscape-painters. And are they not so in fact? Surely no unprejudiced observer can have failed to remark it.

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The low position of landscape in the estimation of Academies is probably in part attributable to this cause. The faculty of able representation is rightly esteemed by all good painters, and a class of artists which is habitually deficient in this quality is sure to find a difficulty in acquiring, *from artists*, honour and recognition. But the niggard recognition of landscape is also due to still more serious objections. It is the commonly received doctrine amongst painters of history and genre, that figure-painting is the representation of *mind*, whereas landscape-painting is the representation of matter. By an inference, not altogether justified, as I hope to show, not altogether logical, yet an inference of a kind which many persons are in the habit of accepting without question, they proceed thence to the conclusion that to paint the figure requires *mind*, whilst to paint landscape mind is not requisite, or, at any rate, never called for in anything like the same degree.

There are writers who speak of Turner as a copier of lifeless matter. This view ignores two things: first, the mind of Turner, who threw his whole soul into an interpretation of nature, which was as far removed from copyism as Shakspeare's writing is from newspaper reporting; and secondly, the mind of God, which invests external nature with all its interest, exactly as the mind of an author invests paper and print with interest.

The fact is, that by our ingenious invention of a goddess of nature, whom we are in the habit of speaking very lightly about, we have left the idea of God to theologians. In our mythology this nature-goddess holds a peculiar place of her own. She is half demon, half deity. Tennyson says she is

> "Red in tooth and claw,
> With ravine."

Ruskin playfully accuses her of miserliness! "Sometimes I have thought her miserliness intolerable; in a gentian, for instance, the way she economizes her ultramarine down in the bell is a little too bad." Scores of writers speak of her in the same disrespectful tone. Substitute God for Nature, and Him for her, and see how that little accusation of miserliness reads! Do these writers really believe that Nature consciously exists as a working goddess? Probably not. She is a fiction for

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the sake of convenience. In the present state of the public mind no fearless investigation of the Divine system of government, *as we see it actually at work*, is permitted to us; so when we talk of any hard and inexorable law, it is a "law of nature;" we do not exactly like, as yet, to call it a law of God. By this timidity we do ourselves serious intellectual injury, and, amongst many other unfortunate results, we arrive at one which closely concerns our present argument. Natural scenery, as the work of a supposed nature-goddess, whom we do not respect, has not, for us, anything like that serious interest which it would have had if we could have received it as a direct expression of the Supreme.

I put forward this argument with no intention of writing what foreigners so justly reprobate as our English cant. For instance, in looking at a fine natural scene, the head of Loch Awe if you will, it never occurs to me to imagine that God designed it as an artist composes a picture. I believe, rather, that by the operation of general laws depressions in the earth were produced, nobody knows exactly how, and that these basins become lakes, as the depressions in a Yorkshireman's plate of porridge become pools of milk, whilst the lumps rise out of them mountainously. And in my view the Scotch or Swiss lakes and mountains cost the Creator just as much thought as, and no more than, the hollows and lumps in the porridge. So of effects; I see God's invention in them, but do not superstitiously imagine that He designed every sunset separately as a painter does.

But, on the other hand, in spite of this modern recognition of pervading law, producing artistic beauty as it produces mechanical construction, I never look at any natural scene or object without the sense of being placed by it in direct communication with the Supreme Artist. You may, if you will, call this world inanimate nature, but every atom of it is inscribed. And let the reader be assured that to comprehend never so slight a manifestation of the Divine mind is no unworthy task for the proudest and cleverest of us. All who study the great natural Revelation are, as to the subject-matter of their studies, on a footing of fraternal equality. Anatomists, astronomers, botanists, geologists, landscape-painters, figure-painters, no one of these has the right to despise the pursuit of the other. There are inequalities of *capacity*: Raphael is

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greater than Dughet, but so is Turner greater than Haydon and West. In science we find no such narrow classifications. Men who explore the solar photosphere do not scorn men who explore a grain of pollen; men who dissect the human body do not scorn men who dissect vegetables.

And one great reason why we go to external nature now is because man no longer conveys to us the Divine idea in its purity, as an Alp or a wild chamois does. It is very well to say that all human developments are in their origin Divine ideas, and no doubt this is in a certain sense true; no doubt the industrial age, for example, was a Divine intention, so that in this sense even the most unlovely life in the hideous streets of Oldham and Rochdale deserves study for its interest as a necessary phase of human evolution. But the artistic instinct turns away from this. The artistic instinct is warned that such phases of human life do not concern it. They concern thinkers and rulers, not artists.

For there is no beauty there. Long rows of cottages, whose monotonous brick fronts are dark with soot; heaps of ashes on the black acre of building-ground yet unoccupied; foul ordure visible everywhere; filthy children playing amongst it with bits of broken pot; behind the cottages a roaring factory, six or seven stories high, its vast monotonous wall pierced with a hundred windows, all alike, and all ugly—half an acre of ugliness, set up vertically against the sky, to bar the sunshine out; great chimney-stalks for towers—ay, fifty of them within a mile,—pouring opaque clouds of foul coal-smoke into the vitiated atmosphere;—no human beauty left there that has not been marred beyond recognition by the life the men and women lead there from infancy; no costume but shapeless fustian for the men, having neither grace nor gaiety; and long straight pinafores for the factory girls, bound round their waists with greasy leathern belts.

To anyone having the sense of beauty,—and all true artists have it,—nothing can well be more depressing than the influences of such a scene. The heart sinks, the sight suffers under them. Yet within the distance of a day's ramble there are wild moors where the heather blooms, and little dells where pure streams fall over rocks of sandstone under green fern, into lucid pools, where the crimson-spotted trout dart swiftly.

We are at the point at last. That street under the factory

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seems less divine than this solitude. The street may have a more tragic interest, and some woodcut designer, working in the same temper as Hood when he wrote the "Song of the Shirt," might find matter there for his note-book, but he must be a man caring nothing for beauty in comparison with human interest,—that is, he must be less an artist than a moralist.

One day I was in the cottage of a factory operative in a back street in Rochdale. The young man who was master of the house (they marry early there) was in a loud agony of grief. After the expiration of a minute, some men brought in a sack, apparently heavy; in the sack was the poor lad's young wife, dead. The sack was opened, and the surgeon who was with me gave the decisive word, "Nothing to be done." It was a most impressive scene; the dead woman's eyes were still quite bright, for she had died of heart-disease, most suddenly, ten minutes before, and her face was by nature beautiful; but the prosaic character of all the accessories quite unfitted the subject for pictorial treatment. It would have done for Cruikshank, however.[1]

Nothing turns away true painters from human life so soon as the loss of visible dignity. And our English life, in every class, has lost it. Our prosy ugly costume and love of convenience have taken away all grandeur from our visible style and carriage. Besides, we are not serious enough, mentally, to deserve the attention of the most serious artists. We are exactly suited for the caricaturist; we are the right material for Doyle and Leech; taking us at the best, we may do for Frith, but we should not much gratify Titian or Velasquez.

"Chose digne d'attention!" said the venerable Delécluze, "c'est lorsque rien n'est plus pris au sérieux, c'est quand l'homme en est arrivé à rire lui-même que les artistes, ainsi que les poëtes qui conservent cependant encore le sentiment et le goût des grandes choses, las de chercher en vain dans les actions des hommes quelque chose de cette grandeur dont la

[1] I might have added a detail which the reader may pardon me for adding in a note. The young woman had been found dead in one of those petties of which there is a row behind every factory. This detail is necessary to the completeness of the impression which the incident produced upon me. To die in a petty (one of twelve in a row) and be brought home in a sack, this is poetical certainly (I am not speaking ironically), but the poetry is of the kind which has immortalized the "Bridge of Sighs," and the "Song of the Shirt."—1873.

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Bible, dont Homère entre autres fournissent tant d'exemples, rejettent en quelque sorte l'humanité comme une matière épuisée, et vont chercher dans la nature végétale et dans les animaux des sujets où la vie est imparfaite, mais demeurée pure depuis la création. Comment expliquer autrement le goût de Poussin pour la solitude, le soin qu'il a pris—lui, peintre d'histoire si excellent, de peindre les bois, les bords ombreux et tristes des fleuves, si ce n'est pas ce besoin impérieux qu'ont les grandes âmes de se retremper aux sources primitives et inaltérables de la création?"

Men and women are more wonderful than mountains, if in the overpowering marvel of creation one thing *can* be called more wonderful than another, when all are alike utterly incomprehensible by us. But men and women have a fatal liberty which mountains have not. They have the liberty of spoiling themselves, of making themselves ugly, and mean, and ridiculous. They tattoo themselves in South Sea islands; what they do in North Sea islands it would be more prudent not to particularize. But a mountain does not know how to be ridiculous. A mountain cannot dress in bad taste. Neither is it capable of degrading itself by vice. Noble human life in a great and earnest age is better artistic material than wild nature; but human life in an age like ours is not.

Note the subjects that true artists choose and avoid, and believe that their instincts lead them rightly. If they paint men, they go back to some age of costume and dignity, or else to some golden time of early poetry, when the primitive human creature fought and loved under the bright sky of the world's youth. Or, if it is contemporary life that they choose, they choose it as humble as possible, *to get down below the strata which vulgarity permeates.* Thus a noble artist will gladly paint a peasant driving a yoke of oxen, but not a commercial traveller in his gig.

I have said so much in other places about the popular ignorance of landscape, that it would be tiresome to harp on that string any longer; but anyone who is habitually attentive to the indications which show the state of culture on a subject that interests him, cannot help forming an opinion, more or less favourable, of the degree to which it is generally understood. What is to be regretted in the present condition of popular information about landscape is this: landscape-

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painters feel no confidence in the public, whereas an artist ought always to feel satisfied that if he merits acknowledgment he will receive it. Here is a little anecdote to the point. Last autumn I found myself on the deck of a steamer plying on the Lake of Geneva. It was crowded with passengers, and just as we got past Coppet, their great object of interest was Mont Blanc. A white cloud concealed the mountain, and all the passengers that I overheard were quite certain that the cloud was Mont Blanc itself. Shortly afterwards the snowy crest became visible, and then they believed that to be a cloud. This mistake would have been impossible if they had known anything about Alpine landscape; because, although clouds under certain unusual circumstances do occasionally look like mountains, that particular one had forms so entirely unlike mountain forms, that nobody acquainted with mountain anatomy could have made the mistake. Such little occurrences as this are, I repeat, discouraging to a landscape-painter. Here were many gentlemen and ladies, rich enough to travel, who could not recognize a mountain when actually set there before them; how, then, should they render justice to the same thing in a picture? They used telescopes and opera glasses; but no trained eyes would have needed a telescope; that sharp, delicate outline of the snow would have been enough for it.

The reader is not aware, perhaps, that some figure-painters even deny to landscape the right to exist as an independent art at all. Landscape is very good, they say, for backgrounds, but it was never intended as anything else than a foil to human or animal life. The doctrine may be shown to be untenable by reminding the reader that there exist, in all *scenic* nature, magnificent compositions, any one of which would be entirely destroyed by the intervention of a large figure or animal in the foreground. No one who is familiar with the Highlands of Scotland, or Switzerland, or even with our English lake district, would desire to hand over pictures of their most striking scenes to an historical painter in order to have figures of large size painted upon them. Surely there are scenes in nature complete enough to deserve a few square feet of canvas to themselves!

A theory more commonly received is the following. It is urged that no scene in nature is worth painting without some

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direct reference to humanity; that nature without human interest is devoid of artistic value.

This is one of those questions which cannot be settled in any definite way for the whole body of spectators. If you say that pure nature has no artistic interest, you speak truly, no doubt, so far as your own feelings are concerned, but I cannot admit that your proposition is universally true, because pure nature has an infinite artistic interest for me, and therefore probably for others who are similarly constituted.[1] It is from the belief that I am on this point the spokesman of a considerable class that I venture to explain this sentiment more in detail. We who love pure nature are not indifferent to humanity. We may, as thinkers and moralists, take the keenest possible interest in human affairs, but we perceive that in this age men and their dwellings are not usually objects of much artistic interest, both because they have so little beauty, and, what is a far graver deficiency, so little sublimity. In these respects the loneliest defiles of the Alps are better than the hotels and

[1] There is a fine passage in the "Seven Lamps of Architecture" in which Mr. Ruskin first describes a Jura landscape, and then attributes its chief power over the mind (justly, no doubt, in his own case) to historical association. "The writer well remembers," he continues, "the sudden blankness and chill which were cast upon it when he endeavoured, in order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness, to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent. The flowers in an instant lost their light, the river its music, the hills became oppressively desolate; a heaviness in the boughs of the darkened forest showed how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs, how much of the glory of the imperishable, or continually renewed, creation is reflected from things more precious in their memories than it, in its renewing."

On the other hand, it may be observed that the forest scenery of France (or any populous and civilized country) may gain greatly in sublimity whenever we are able momentarily to imagine it to be the scenery of true primæval forests in America or Africa. Châteaubriand moved thousands of readers by describing the forests of that very New Continent which chilled Mr. Ruskin's imagination when he thought of it. The exact truth appears to be simply this, that different persons, or the same persons in different moods, may feel impressed either by the presence of human association in landscape or by its absence. As an example of the latter let me mention the feelings of a man when he sets his foot (as on an Alpine peak hitherto unascended) where no human foot has ever before trodden, and also the strong impression received by travellers such as Livingstone, from scenery which for the European mind can have no association with human history or tradition.—1873.

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tourists of Chamounix. Indeed Switzerland, in our view, is as nearly as possible *spoiled* by its visitors. In like manner we believe the valleys of Lancashire and Yorkshire—the beautiful vale of Todmorden, for example—to be (artistically) ruined by factories, and rows of cottages, and railways, and excellent turnpike roads. We have no objection to an old castle, we consider the head of Loch Awe to be improved by Kilchurn; but we cannot admire the modern castles of Taymouth and Inverary, much as we may respect the families of Breadalbane and Argyll. In short, when the human interest increases the pictorial value of the locality, as mediæval fortifications do, we are glad to have it; but when it diminishes the pictorial value, as almost all modern buildings and engineering works do, we prefer wild nature.

It remains only to indicate what, in the present writer's opinion, ought to be the chief aims of landscape-painting, and what position is due to it. Its great object as an art ought to be the faithful rendering of the spirit and character of natural scenery and interesting localities. Any accuracy is worthless which does not express character; every inaccuracy is to be praised which helps to express it better. Everything in landscape art ought to contribute to render, with the most striking fidelity, not merely the scene, but that which is far deeper and more divine, the *spirit* of the scene. And here, I am bound to observe, many of our most popular artists fail, and they fail from a dread of producing strange-looking pictures. If you paint local character, your work is sure to have peculiarities which will fail to correspond with the vague general ideas that exist on the subject of landscape, and therefore you are likely to offend. A well-known and most experienced dealer said to me one day, in all friendliness, "If you paint a truth which one spectator has not seen in nature, you make that man your enemy." A recent critic, speaking of an artist of real genius, Mr. E. B. Jones, said, what was true, that his works pleased some and offended others; but then the critic proceeded to mention another artist, of whom he said, with understood allusion to Mr. E. B. Jones, that this man "trod on nobody's toes." To paint, then, in a manner not agreeable to the spectator, is resented by him as a personal annoyance and injury —a treading on the toes. Now, it is very desirable that a more liberal view should prevail. If the works of an artist do

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not please you, pass on to those of another whom you like better, and try to believe that there is no intention to hurt or offend *you* on the part of the painter you dislike. In all probability he has been aiming at some quality he thinks desirable; perhaps he has not attained the quality, but is on the road to it. It is not his interest to give offence; he would be ten times happier to give pleasure; but he is trying to accomplish something that *he* sees clearly enough, no doubt, yet which it is not to be expected that we should see until he has fully set it forth.

I may have insisted upon this somewhat importunately; I may have offended by praising the truth that gives offence, but no art doctrine has need of more frequent reiteration than this, *Local truth should be held sacred and inviolable.* I do not mean that we ought to confine ourselves to rigid topography, but that local character ought to be everywhere affectionately studied, thoroughly understood, faithfully though freely rendered. And there is the more need to preach this doctrine, that many critics have a lofty scorn of local truth, as something opposed to the true spirit of art and incompatible with noble work. For example, because Gustave Doré went into Spain before illustrating "Don Quixote," a well-known French critic thought it the right thing to say that the work would have been better if Doré had not seen Spain.

I would entreat the reader to use all his influence in favour of that kind of landscape which really means something and expresses something. If a painter, by the side of some French river, is struck by some long monotonous line of poplars, do not find fault with the monotony, but thank him for it; it is the spirit of the place. If another painter far in the Scottish hills reproduces the sadness and solitude of their dear humble, barren crests, grey and purple in the chilly twilight, do not find fault with the melancholy and loneliness of his work; it *ought* to be melancholy and lonely, for that was the spirit of the scene.

It is generally a waste of time to trouble ourselves much about classifications of painters according to subjects; the points of real importance are the qualities of the individual artist. Anyone who has the true critical faculty can easily recognize great powers in the treatment of very simple subjects. It is those powers by which an artist takes his place. And

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whatever branch of art a man may have chosen, if he has contrived to make first-rate gifts manifest in his work, we ought to put him in the first rank. The phrases "*simple paysagiste*" and "mere landscape-painter" imply that criticism is a much easier business than it really is. Truly, if the rank of artists might be settled by the kind of subjects they paint, anybody might be an art critic. The real difficulty of criticism lies in the fact that the most splendid artistic faculties may be lavished on apparently humble work, and a good critic is neither to be dazzled by ambition in the choice of a subject, nor turned aside from what is good and able because it does not happen to be at the same time pretentious.

The strong point of landscape is its power of affecting the feelings by influences very difficult to define in words. Music also has nameless powers, and, as a writer lately observed in the *Cornhill Magazine*, there is some resemblance between the way landscape-painting and musical compositions move us.

I am inclined to believe that the communicative powers of musical sounds are habitually underrated. They deserve passing allusion here in connection with landscape-painting, because music, like landscape art, is not strictly what is called an intellectual pursuit, and is held in exceedingly low estimation by all who are insensible to it. But may not these vague musical expressions of thought and feeling be the only expression possible for *those* thoughts and *those* feelings? I have often felt whilst listening to great music that something was thereby communicated to me which could not reach me through any other channel. Literary expression is no doubt more practical and positive; but are we quite sure that it is higher, merely because it is more definite? The same narrow spirit of classification which roughly sets down landscape as unmeaning, would put music below poetry; but the more we understand it, the more embarrassing it appears to settle its place. It may be that music expresses aspirations that words cannot express, and these aspirations may very possibly be higher than those we utter verbally.

If the peculiar strength of landscape lies in this vague kind of influence, that of figure-painting is to be sought in dramatic expression. Thus, so far as it is possible to compare one man of genius with another, we might say that Leslie was a successor of Pope and Goldsmith, whilst Millais is the younger

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brother of Tennyson and Keats, whereas Turner might be better compared with some very great musician.

As to the rank which landscape-painting ought to hold amongst the fine arts, I claim for it simple independence. One of my critics said that I seemed to rank it above figure-painting, but that such would never be the general opinion. This is one of those misinterpretations to which every public writer is liable. Some previous writers have treated landscape with contempt, and I say that it does not deserve contempt; *therefore* it is inferred that I set up landscape art above figure art. The inference is entirely unwarranted.[1] If anyone asserts that landscape is easy, that it is a mindless copyism of dead matter, I am ready to answer him that it is *difficult*, and that, when good, it is a mindful *interpretation* of mind; that is to say, an interpretation by human genius of the Mind that created the world. But the idea of giving precedence to artists according to the subjects they choose, seems to me so unpractical, so inapplicable, so deficient in the simplest elements of common sense, that it never once occurred to me to entertain it.

The fact will always remain, that men take a keener interest in each other than in the external world, and so naturally pay most attention to the art which deals with man. Perhaps, too, our love of landscape is in great part due to a repulsion from the present unartistic and unlovely aspect of humanity. In an age when men and architecture are fit only to be caricatured, artists who have not the peculiar faculty of the caricaturist naturally go to external nature and the life of animals or peasants. But if, in the future, man and his dwellings should again become noble and interesting, will not artists turn to him and them again, and neglect forests and mountains? There is some chance of this.

Meanwhile we have the beauty of the earth, and its grandeur. But can we paint its grandeur? Is it wise to desert the common pastoral subjects of Claude and Cuyp for the snowy

[1] Notwithstanding this passage, which I had hoped was sufficiently clear, an American critic, in speaking of this very book, again attributed to me the opinion that landscape ought to have a higher place than figure painting. This is very far from my thoughts. I like a good landscape better than a bad figure-picture, and the converse, but have always respected figure-painters quite as heartily as landscape-painters, and enjoyed their works quite as much as landscapes.—1873.

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crests that dazzled the eyes of Calame? M. Delaborde doubts this; he does not exactly admit that art may deal with the extraordinary in landscape. He is right in one point, I think. Painting, even the truest, is a kind of fiction; and it is admitted that fiction cannot quite safely deal with extraordinary truth, because it appeals to the recognition of the fidelity of its representation, and few can recognize what is rare in nature. So far, it may be admitted that Troyon, for instance, was wiser than Calame. But I object to M. Delaborde's idea that Alpine scenery is more "irregular" than commonplace landscape; and I object also to another theory of his, that such scenery lies out of the conditions of portraiture. Alpine scenery may not be familiar to Parisians, but it is strictly natural, strictly under the influence of *law*, and of very wonderful and beautiful laws too; indeed, the laws of earth structure can nowhere be seen more plainly than in Switzerland, where, from flat diluvial ground to Alpine *aiguilles*, you can study every manifestation of the energy of the earth. And as to the objection that the Alps lie out of the conditions of portraiture, let this little anecdote answer it. Not very long ago, I entered Martigny in the evening from the Forclaz. A nameless mountain rose before me, but I knew it instantly from a drawing of Ruskin's. I had quite forgotten the locality of the drawing, but on returning home I looked through "Modern Painters" and found it. The real truth is, that every mountain has features of its own which bring it within the conditions of portraiture quite as much as a man's face; but faithful landscape is too modern to obtain recognition, as yet, from orthodox criticism, which always makes a point of being a century or two behind its age.

Of Calame's degree of success in Alpine landscape I have not space to speak here with justice; but, considering what had been done before him, he was a discoverer in art. What is more to our present purpose is the comparison instituted by M. Delaborde between Flandrin and Calame, so much to the disparagement of the latter. This is only one instance the more of the extreme difficulty of obtaining in landscape anything like that serious kind of consideration awarded to distinguished figure-painters. Calame deserved this if ever anyone did. He was quite as earnest as Flandrin, and quite as pure and devoted a genius. Calame had the highest aims, and in great

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part realized them; so indeed had also Flandrin. But Calame practised an art which did not admit of the direct display of those human sympathies which most surely reach the heart of humanity. Flandrin painted saints and princes; Calame gave the energy of a life to the chilling sublimities of nature.

Closely connected with the dislike to extraordinary scenery is the dislike to extraordinary effects. The spectator's impression on looking at a picture in which one of these effects is attempted appears to be frequently something of this kind: "The artist is amusing himself at my expense:" or else, "The artist means to read me a lesson on my own ignorance;" and in either case a feeling of rebellion or resentment arises. The simple truth is, that effects are the life of landscape, and that the most powerful of them are the moments when this life is carried to its utmost pitch and paroxysm of intensity. Such effects are necessarily rare, as the crises of passion are rare in the soul of man; but no one knows a landscape who has not seen it under a noble effect, just as no one knows a human being who has not seen him in a moment of supreme excitement. And again, not only for their intensity of life are the noble effects observed and valued, but still more for their great artistic quality of synthesis. A fine effect is pictorially complete; a common effect is usually scattered and comparatively unmeaning: a fine effect has large masses and vigorous oppositions; a common effect is apt to be broken and feeble, requiring much artistic faculty in the painter himself to get a synthetic whole out of it. And it is especially natural that colourists should like the rare effects, because they always give magnificent arrangements of colour. Intense gold and purple are to be seen on the horizon of hilly countries for ten minutes at a time, on perhaps twenty evenings in a year; rich crimson and fiery scarlet still more rarely. A landscape-painter who loves gold and purple, or crimson and scarlet, is therefore very naturally led to attempt these rare effects. A figure-painter who loves the same colours may introduce them whenever he chooses by means of draperies and accessories.

As to the prudence of attempting these effects, no doubt that is another question. If we cannot paint plain daylight, it is useless to attempt these splendours. But no young landscape-painter would be worth much who did not long to try

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for them; and even a few failures may be better for him than placid contentment with sober green and grey.

The worst of adopting landscape as a means of expressing yourself is the difficulty, *not* of putting intelligence and feeling into your work, for landscape will absorb any quantity of both, but of getting credit for them when there. It may be answered, that painters ought to be above the desire for public recognition, above the vanity which cannot live without praise. But we may observe that not painters only, but *all* men, need recognition in their avocations to enable them to work cheerfully. It is not praise and fame they want so much as the satisfaction of feeling that the amount of mind they put into their work will reach others. Nothing is more cruelly discouraging to an intellectual and feeling workman than the sense that an obstruction exists between his mind and the mind of the public.

This may serve to account for the fact, that whereas we have in England, at the present day, at least a dozen most excellent landscape-painters, and twenty or thirty really good ones, we hear on every side complaints of the decadent condition of landscape. Now, it is a positive truth that the *average* merit of landscape work has never been so high or anything like so high as it is now. But a few years since a great commotion was made about the works of Turner, and the brilliant advocacy of a distinguished writer directed, for a time, public attention to the branch of the art which Turner professed. Since then the public mind has reverted to its natural channel, and even great landscape-painters have no chance of obtaining that degree of attention which is freely accorded to third-rate painters of a figure. Lee Bridell awoke a little murmur of fame before he died, and a few were aware that a noble career had been cut short in its early prime; but the busy world was ignorant of its loss. The imperial biographer of Cæsar has read the nations a lesson on their want of confidence in that order of genius which must subjugate before it can improve; yet it is not unnatural that we should fail to recognize benefactors who begin by requiring us to be slaves. An ingratitude far less excusable is that which repels a benefit accompanied by no condition, and turns away coldly from the kindly teaching which would lay no yoke upon us but the thrall of a sweet pleasure that never knew repentance.—1865.

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NOTE.

In "Essays in History and Art," by R. H. Patterson, I find some passages which express the feeling about landscape that is often prevalent amongst literary and cultivated people. Mr. Patterson says :—

"The spirit which leads to the acknowledgment of God in His works will ever concentrate itself peculiarly upon that part of nature which is more divine than the rest—upon living beings rather than dead things—and, most of all, upon MAN. Man, the noblest of God's works which human eye can see—made after the very image of God himself,—who alone of all this world's pageantry is destined for immortality,—who can set his foot on the everlasting hills and say 'I outlive you!' Man, lord of the earth, and heir of heaven—is there anything in the whole world that can furnish a theme like this? anything so noble, so beautiful, so divine, for poet or artist to lavish his might on, or for the human race itse to contemplate? *Landscape-painting*—bah!"

Again, in the concluding passage of the same essay, Mr. Patterson recurs to the subject in the same tone :—

"All history shows that the highest departments of Science and Art were occupied first: God in India and Judæa—man in China —mind in Greece—and the stars everywhere, but especially in Assyria. Taking European civilization alone, we find as indices of this truth, in ancient Greece, Homer and Æschylus, Plato and Aristotle—in mediæval Italy, Dante and Tasso, Michael Angelo and Raffaelle—in England, Shakespeare and Milton, Bacon and Newton. And just as these higher fields are excelled in (we do not say exhausted, for no department of mind will ever be exhausted) by the finite intelligence of man, men take of the lower ones. They turn from the old to the new, from the higher to the lower; and then we have arrived at the age of Landscape-painting. We do not undervalue Landscape-painting;—it is no part either of our inclination or of our theory to do so. We love it, as we think, 'Wisely,' not, like Mr. Ruskin, 'too well.' And we shall never consent that he should defame higher and infinitely nobler manifestations of mind by subordinating them to, or even placing them on an equality with, this last and lowest of æsthetic studies. A copier of lifeless matter, of inanimate nature, to be classed with

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giants of intellect whose heads touched the skies! An expatiator in the narrow field of landscape-painting to be ranked with men whose genius overflowed all creation! 'Shakespeare—Bacon—*Turner!*' BAH!"

This kind of writing has not precision enough to be readily answerable, but let me try, only avoiding the theological matter, on which discussion would not be possible in these limits, or in a book of this character. That men turn from the higher to the lower as their knowledge advances, is true in a sense quite different from that which the writer of the above passages attached to his favourite theory. The truth is that as men become more cultivated and better informed, the number of things that interest them enlarges, but they do not desert high subjects for low ones; their circle of vision simply includes more. Our own age has been fruitful in the most elevated speculation, and has thrown much light upon subjects which in all ages have been considered high subjects. At the same time it takes an increasing interest in subjects which times of inferior knowledge would have considered beneath attention, and this simply because its *general* power of taking interest is extended by its wider culture. Amateurship in landscape, said Goethe, presupposes a highly cultivated art, and we may go still further and affirm that the painting of landscape by professional artists presupposes an advanced culture in the public they address. But a highly cultivated age does not desert or abandon any one of the fields of culture. Astronomy awakened the interest of the most ancient peoples, yet astronomy has never been followed by so many students as to-day. It is a great error to suppose that because we are interested in landscape we are less interested in humanity. The landscape work of Turner is full of human interest from beginning to end. He drew thousands of buildings, and in every scene he illustrated there is a pervading sentiment which is not less profoundly human than that of other poets who have expressed themselves in the medium of verse. It is childish to speak of the stars as a *higher* subject than landscape, merely because the stars are popularly supposed to be above the earth. Seen rightly, in its true relations to God and man, every object, however humble, is richly deserving of our study. Geology is not a lower study than astronomy; it is the investigation of a planet which we have the advantage of seeing near, as astronomy is the investigation of planets and stars seen at a distance. The most concentrated expression of that modern feeling for nature which

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Mr. Patterson despises is to be found in this little poem of Tennyson :—

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

—1873.

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XVI.

THE HOUSING OF NATIONAL ART TREASURES.

WHEN artistic questions come before Parliament, it is usually in connection with public edifices or national pictures. On such occasions it is curious to observe how few members really take part in the discussion, how these few always reappear, and with what languid interest other honourable gentlemen listen to them or bear with them. Lovers of art ought to feel warmly grateful to the few representatives who maintain, however they may differ among themselves, that Art is a matter of national concern, requiring, from time to time, the attention of the Legislature. It might be desirable, perhaps, that these gentlemen should be more united in their views; but it is well known to all who study the fine arts that identity of opinion on that subject is hopeless, the only agreement that can be expected amongst lovers of art being that they all agree to love it in one way or other, though never exactly in the same way.

There is a marked tendency in the English mind, especially in that peculiar manifestation of it which may be called the English parliamentary mind, to receive coldly any proposition based upon abstract ideas of *what ought to be*, whilst it readily entertains proposals for modifications and improvements in *what is*. English sentiment in this respect is very faithfully represented by the way in which country gentlemen usually set about improvements on their mansions and estates. They have a rooted dislike to comprehensive plans, necessitating sacrifices which are to be made all at once, and changes which admit of no transition. They make sacrifices which are in the

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end equally heavy, and changes which are equally revolutionary, but they set about it in the national manner, pulling down a gable here, building out a new room there, altering the roads and fences year by year, till the ghosts of their fathers would not know the old places again if they revisited the moon's glimpses. This is probably due to some tenderness of sentiment. We get attached to places and things, even when we acknowledge them to be inconvenient. A total and sudden change, even for the better, leaves a void in the recesses of our hearts. Here is Mr. Cowper, for instance, who has got attached in some mysterious way to those plain and homely little rooms in Trafalgar Square, which we dignify by the proud title of a "National Gallery," and so pleads for their retention in the body of a new Palace of Art worthy of the nation. "It would be a clumsy thing," he says, "to pull down the present Gallery entirely; a good architect would leave a great part of it standing, but transform it by additions into all that is desired. There would be a new façade and a new building would be attached to the old building, which would be so altered and reconstructed that you would not know it again." Mr. Cowper cannot feel hurt at being compared to so respectable a class of men as country gentlemen. I therefore venture to observe that this bit of economy is exactly that of a country gentleman making what he calls "alterations;" it is very respectable, and in the highest degree national, but it is not artistic, and it is not wise. It is *pottering*. And whatever has to be done about art should be done in a very different spirit.

Other members felt this as soon as they heard that there was a hankering for saving the beloved old rooms. Mr. Tite said, "It was quite idle to think of adapting the present building to the purposes of a National Gallery." Sir G. Bowyer, like an Israelite in Canaan, would pull the present building down utterly, and "let not one stone remain upon another." Mr. Locke "entirely concurred in the opinion that if anything was to be done with the National Gallery, it ought to be pulled down altogether. As he understood the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Cowper), he was going to put a new face upon the National Gallery; but putting a new face upon a man did not alter his inside, nor did it produce any greater change in a building. Although a new face might be put upon the National Gallery, the old miserable rooms would remain within, and

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every disgrace and inconvenience which attached to the building would be perpetuated." Mr. Gregory hoped "that his right hon. friend would make it a *sine quâ non* that the new Gallery should be built *de novo*, and that nothing should be taken from the present structure. No patchwork whatever could convert the present gallery into a creditable building worthy of the treasures it was to contain." Mr. Locke repeated that "if the new gallery were to be built in harmony with the old one, it would be a dead failure. It would cost a great deal and satisfy no one." Sir J. Pakington "was anxious that there should be neither harmony nor resemblance between the present National Gallery and the proposed new building, which he trusted would be a complete design suited to the site and the object required."

It is highly satisfactory to know that a few energetic members of Parliament are quite alive to the necessity for a grander way of treating this question than the Government seems inclined to venture upon. To retain the present building, or any portion of it, within the new one, would be a fatal error. It would ruin the design by compelling the new galleries to accommodate themselves to the bad ones we have already. The existing rooms are such as would naturally be constructed at an epoch when the nation was only just beginning, in a feeble, infantine way, to wish for a collection of pictures, but they are not such as a wealthy country like England ought to retain permanently even as a portion of its great art gallery. The Government hopes to save a little money by retaining these apartments, and it is the traditional policy of British Governments to pinch on artistic expenditure generally, because the mass of country constituents care nothing about art. Governments are not to be severely blamed for representing, in the way they order the expenditure of public money, the general feeling of the nation, however narrow or misguided it may be. If the nation were really anxious to have noble public buildings, Cabinets would seek popularity by erecting them. But it may be permitted to observe that on certain occasions it may become the duty and even the interest of the Government to make itself the representative of a small instructed class rather than of a large uninformed one. Our Government does so from time to time on various occasions; it has done so even in artistic matters, especially in

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the purchase of valuable pictures, most notably the magnificent Veronese. The country constituents would not, as a body, be inclined to think that a piece of old canvas could possibly be worth such a sum as 14,000*l.*; still the purchase was made, and very rightly, because the country constituents were not the best judges. I only wish that in the erection of a new building for the national pictures something of the same boldness might be exercised. Mr. Cowper, with that timidity which is habitual to gentlemen in his position, tries to propitiate Parliament by the assurance that the new gallery will only cost 100,000*l.* Immediately afterwards we read that "the vote of 200,000*l.*, the proportion of the total sum of 703,000*l.* required this year for the purchase of lands and houses for a site for the new Courts of Justice and offices, was agreed to." The Courts of Justice are not likely to cost much less than a million, including the site, and one-tenth of that sum is proposed for the great national Palace of Art.

I am aware that the site of the new National Gallery is already partly supplied by the land occupied by the old one, and it fortunately happens that the remaining ground required is to be had on reasonable terms. Still, such a sum as 100,000*l.* is evidently inadequate even for the erection of a fine building. Imagine, for example, what it would cost to reproduce the Louvre in London! I am far from desiring such a reproduction, for although the Louvre is altogether very grand, and in parts very beautiful (especially the old quadrangle and the colonnade), it is not by any means a perfect picture gallery; but I *do* say that England, considering her prodigious wealth, and her proud position amongst European nations, ought to have an art palace, in no way inferior to the Louvre in point of size and artistic magnificence, and very far superior to it in convenience and wise adaptation to the purposes for which it should be erected. What the Louvre has cost I hardly dare venture to estimate: the new buildings which join it to the Tuileries have swallowed up, I believe, more than two millions sterling; the old quadrangle could scarcely be erected in our day for less than a million. It is true that much of the new structure is used for other than artistic purposes, but we have said nothing about the long gallery. A more useful building might be had for less cost but a build-

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ing which should be at the same time a good gallery and an imposing work of architectural art could scarcely be completed for less than one million sterling, exclusively of the site.

Not that our gallery need be erected all at once. The best way would be to get first the land for the site, and a noble design, one specially suited to an art gallery, yet at the same time of palatial splendour, then pull down the present National Gallery entirely, as Sir George Bowyer would have it, leaving not one stone remaining upon another; after that begin to build a piece of the new palace, large enough for our present wants, and let the plan be strictly followed, as future necessities arose. In the great Gothic times, "when men knew how to build," it never seems to have occurred to them that a cathedral must necessarily be finished before it was used, or that one generation was bound to end the labour. Only let the plan be worthy enough and magnificent enough, only *begin* it grandly, and posterity will be sure to carry it forward!

It is especially necessary that a National Gallery should be begun on the understanding that the design is too vast for one generation. National art collections are accumulative; no year passes without adding to their wealth. If it were known that the nation had a great building which was *intended to grow* with the collections, valuable bequests would be thereby much encouraged and would become much more frequent. Therefore, I say, let us begin a great Palace of Art of such vast design that to complete it will cost millions, but let us not think of completing it in our day, only of beginning it, and gradually going on with it as fresh space is wanted.

This would be the right spirit in which to enter on such a task. The present building is an excellent example of how a wrong and foolish spirit sets to work in such matters. It is thoroughly *bourgeois* from dome to pavement. A National Gallery was to be built at once,—that is, in a year or two,—it must look rather imposing, and yet be economical. Pillars, it is well known, are imposing: there were royal pillars at Carlton House, no longer wanted, a capital opportunity for uniting economy with a certain degree of splendour, so the architect is told that he must make use of these particular pillars. The front was planned to fit these adjuncts, and the domes were added to give an august and Michelangelesque expression to the whole. We know the result; we know that for years

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such of us as have eyes and can see are weary of pillars and pediment, and utterly ashamed of the dome and her twin daughters. Even our good, honest English attachment to ugly things that we have been accustomed to will not reconcile us to *them*.

That edifice is now somewhere about thirty years old, and we are already talking about destroying it, or metamorphosing it so that nobody may know it again; for so heartily is the thing hated, that anyone who ventures to talk of preserving it is at particular pains to impress it on our minds that we shall not recognize the object of our aversion in the disguise he proposes for it. And what did this condemned monstrosity cost? *It cost ninety-six thousand pounds.* And for four thousand more Mr. Cowper now tells us that he hopes to provide an edifice worthy of the nation! Well may he be anxious to destroy as little as possible of the existing building! Well may he reflect that all that brickwork, and lath, and plaster, and flooring, have cost money!

We cannot have a noble edifice for any such sum. We may get bare shelter for the pictures, and if we manage *very* cleverly, more cleverly than any nation ever yet *did* manage, we may so arrange our simple picture-shed as to be able to see and study the works it will protect. That would be a great thing, certainly, a result well worth the money asked for. But a national edifice worthy of England for four thousand more than the Wilkins' gallery cost is a delusion!

If the Government does not feel justified in voting more than a small sum, say 200,000*l.*, why not make an appeal to all lovers of art in England? Might we not all join, according to our means, in a great national subscription? If it is wrong to tax those who do not care for Art in order to build a palace they will never enjoy, let us who *do* care tax ourselves voluntarily. Might not the Royal Academy, as a body, give a handsome sum for so great a purpose? Might not our great collectors give the value of one or two pictures? Might not our successful artists give a month's earnings? And might not all these subscriptions be repeated, along with a new Government grant, as each generation built its *piece* of the great palace? That is how the great cathedrals were built: everybody gave something, generation after generation. It is true that they did it often from selfish reasons—to eat butter in Lent, to escape

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hell, to obtain indulgences; but may not we, who profess to be enlightened lovers of the fine arts, spend for once, *together*, and for a great public purpose, instead of spending always singly for our own selfish ends?

Let us first imagine what a very simple but useful gallery, or picture shed, ought to be; and then after that let us indulge the dream of what a noble national Palace of Art ought to be.

No actually existing picture gallery comes so near to the plain practical ideal as that at South Kensington. You can see the pictures, or most of them; the rooms are not too lofty, and the light, though not too glaring, is abundant. There is no room in the Louvre so good, unless it be that new little one with the black doors, the first on your right hand as you pass from the Salon Carré down the long gallery. For, after all, the best gallery is that in which the pictures are best seen. The best thing, of whatever kind, is that which best answers the peculiar purpose of that particular sort of thing. For instance, the gallery at South Kensington, however unadorned, is a better gallery than those two new halls in the Louvre where the French School is lodged. Those rooms are most noble rooms; but they are so lofty that three-fourths of the pictures are lost in them by being hung, not too high to be *seen*, as objects, but too high to be *studied*, as pictures. I may be told that it is a good thing to have lofty halls, for two reasons: first, because they are grander, architecturally, which is very true; and, secondly, because more people may breathe in them, which is also true. I may also be told, that although the hall may be lofty, there is no necessity for hanging pictures any higher than in a lower room. To these objections I answer, first, that the architectural qualities of the rooms must be made subservient to their fitness for their purpose, and that, as a matter of fact, low rooms may be, and often have been, beautiful in their own way; secondly, that although more people could breathe in lofty rooms, low ones would spread the visitors over three times the extent of flooring, and so neutralize the objection; thirdly, that to expect that all pictures in a crowded collection will be hung low, when there are vast wall spaces above left quite unoccupied, is futile, because the pictures must be put somewhere, and will be hung on that empty space, as the collection increases, whether out of sight

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or not. When you sacrifice a hundred masterpieces of painting to the architectural proportions of one hall, you are guilty of great waste. The whole Louvre, as a work of art, is not worth the tenth part of the treasures that are hidden in it by reason of its irrational construction; and if the whole of that palace were razed to the earth, and a plain cotton-spinning shed built on the site of it, and the pictures shown under the shed, on low screens of wood, or low brick walls, such as we enclose paddocks with, the collection would gain more by that change than it lost when the Allies took away from it the spoils of Napoleon.

It is so difficult to speak on this subject with common patience, that I hardly dare trust myself on such ground at all. Such picture-hanging as that in the Louvre seems to me to be not merely foolish or thoughtless, but so entirely irrational as to be the work of something below the level of humanity. No English word is strong enough to express stupidity of *that* calibre; but a French word will, namely, *bête*. To buy masterpieces, and then stick them up for hundreds of years where they cannot be seen, is *bête*, because a picture is of no use if it is not seen. If a lad went to study Latin, and his tutor were to say to him, "You shall not hold your book where you can read it, but it shall be placed at such a distance from you as to be illegible," what would you think of that tutor? Would you not say he was crazy? Well, but picture-hangers constantly *do* that. I being a student of art, go to the Louvre, and very much wish to see certain pictures: these pictures are hung so high as to be for purposes of study inaccessible to me; but I find the general public, which does not care to read the pictures, is perfectly contented to leave them where they are; all it wants is to give one glance, be able henceforth to say it has "seen" them (a polite fib), and be off to its drive and its dinner. But ask some real student what *he* thinks of it!

In all practical matters unconnected with the fine arts the right kind of building is found and erected at once. Look at a great cotton-weaving shed; what a vast area! how well lighted! and yet one of the cheapest of constructions, when once you have the ground. Such a shed would be an *ideal* gallery; let it be provided with partitions or screens, and it would hold thousands of pictures! Some mention was made in Parliament of a "quadrangle;" is a picture gallery to have

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a quadrangle because the colleges at Oxford have? It is a most wanton waste of space. All that space should be covered in. Staircases were mentioned also. What need of a staircase? Is the gallery to be necessarily two storeys high? One *vast* ground-floor is what is wanted. If you have two storeys, only one of them can be lighted from above. If, in addition to a shed for pictures, we can afford a palatial front towards the square, we should need staircases to get to the upper storeys of our palace; but as we are planning a cheap gallery just now, to suit the proposed vote of 100,000*l.*, it is no use talking about staircases. The great thing is to resolve, first, that our gallery shall be immensely spacious, and so well arranged that every picture may be seen perfectly. A low shed will accomplish this; if we can afford a noble palace, by all means let us have one *between the shed and the square.* But what is most to be deprecated is a cheap attempt which tries to be both palace and gallery, and is neither the one nor the other,—a building where the pictures cannot all be seen, which leaves no room for expansion, and which in itself, with all its pretensions, is without importance as a piece of architecture.

I am quite aware that these notions will seem strange and heretical to persons accustomed to build from tradition. But I want us to be as independent of tradition in our gallery as we have been in most other things in which we have succeeded. Railway carriages are not constructed precisely like stage coaches; and is there any particular reason why picture galleries should be built like gentlemen's mansions?

When you go to a painter's studio and ask him to show you a picture, he does not run upstairs with it and hang it out at the window of the third storey and tell you to go out into the street and look up at it. No; he puts it on an easel, level with your eye, wheels the easel into the best light, and you really *see* the work. Now in a rationally contrived gallery you ought to be able to see *every* picture just as easily and comfortably as that. And if I and the others who think with me had our will about the National Gallery, every picture in it would be as accessible and as easily seen as if it were still on the easel in the studio of the master who painted it.

So that if the object were to have a cheap gallery I would first pull down the present building, and then, having bought a

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large space of land behind it, proceed to erect a vast shed, one storey high, with a decent-looking stone front towards the square, and plain brick walls behind. This shed I would have lighted from above over its whole extent; then, inside, I would build long low walls of partition so as to divide the shed into many corridor-like galleries. Small separate rooms would economize space still farther, and would have the advantage of isolating each master. But there is the practical objection that each room would require the constant presence of a guardian. *There should be only one line of pictures.* Each picture should be so hung that its own horizon line should be from five feet to five feet six inches from the floor. The walls should be covered with flock paper of a rich dark maroon colour, showing a slight, just perceptible pattern, nearly in the same tint. (The paper in the present Turner Gallery is of too light and bright a red.) *Ample space should be left round every picture frame.* A good rule to make would be that every picture should have a margin of bare wall equivalent to half its own breadth. All this luxury of floor and wall space could scarcely be achieved in a thin line of building running round a quadrangle, whereas it might most easily be afforded in a great shed occupying the whole space. We might easily manage, if we really made it an object, *to hang every one of the national pictures on the line.* If a picture is not good enough to be hung on the line, it is not good enough to be in the national collection. If we cannot afford to hang the present pictures all on the line, we had better stop purchasing, and even sell part of our present collection, till we *can* afford it. But it is nonsense to talk of England not being able to afford a few hundred yards of low brick wall. For the cost of some common governmental blunder or mishap, for one-tenth part of the cost of some useless and inglorious war, such a gallery might be built as would show perfectly and conveniently to art students every picture and drawing we possess, and leave ample space for the acquisitions of a coming half-century.

To recapitulate the requirements of a plain picture shed :—

1. It should be only one storey high.

2. The whole area of its site should be entirely covered in, and not enclosed by a quadrangle.

3. This vast floor should be divided by low parallel walls into long corridors.

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4. Every picture should be hung at that height which in the Royal Academy Exhibition is known as "the line."

5. The building should be perfectly fire-proof, the floor of tiles, the walls of brick, the roof of iron and glass.

But so great a nation as England ought farther to desire that its Gallery should be not only a convenient receptacle for works of art, but also, in itself, a noble work of art. The wealthiest of nations ought, on so fitting an occasion as this, to act with a grandeur becoming her prosperity. We ought to have, not merely a picture shed, but a great Palace of Art. We ought to erect something not only far more useful than the Louvre as a place for the exhibition of pictures, but even, if possible, more magnificent. We are perfectly aware of the extreme costliness of such a plan, but there are weighty reasons why this cost ought not to be begrudged.

A great deal of the effect of a picture, far more of it than most people imagine, is due to the objects which surround it. A fine picture is rather a climax or centre of splendour than splendour in itself. There is an art of multiplying fourfold the apparent value of pictures at a cost which bears but slight proportion to the cost of the works themselves. An artist friend of mine, passing one day before the house of a well-known Parisian dealer, observed that one window had been cleared of everything but a solitary small picture. This was framed with extreme splendour and taste, and all round nothing was to be seen but rich pomegranate-coloured velvet. Aided thus, the picture (it was a masterpiece of colour by Decamps) glowed exceedingly. So my friend went in and said to the dealer, "You have been taking particular pains about that Decamps; I suppose you want a high price." "Just so; I must have 40,000 francs for it." Now, what that cunning tradesman did as a matter of business we ought to do for the national pictures from motives of a higher kind. This way of helping art by surrounding it well does not seem to be at all understood by persons in authority in England. Robert Browning, I imagine, would understand it, for he wrote about the murex dye,—

> "Enough to furnish Solomon
> Such hangings for his cedar house
> That when, gold-robed, he took the throne
> *In that abyss of blue*, the spouse

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Might swear his presence *shone*
Most like the centre spike of gold
Which burns deep in the bluebell's womb."

Take the hangings away, and what becomes of Solomon?

The objection on the score of expense is frivolous. If you can afford to spend 14,000*l.* on a Veronese and 9,000*l.* on a Raphael, you can afford to surround each of them with a broad margin of good pomegranate velvet. And not only that, but you can afford a gallery for your paintings so finished that the eye of the spectator may rest upon nothing mean or poor as he approaches these precious masterpieces. It is not seemly that treasures which are of such immense value that money affords no means of estimating it should be housed in rooms meaner and more uncomfortable than the barest entrance-halls to our great hotels. In a National Gallery the pictures should be surrounded with everything that may enhance their beauty and prove how much we value them. If the floor is of wood, it should be an inlaid *parquet* of various and beautiful woods; the doors and fittings of the room should be at once massive and delicately wrought, like the superb ebony panelling of the Salon Carré. But as there is a grave objection to the employment of wood in picture galleries on the score of danger from fire, we should be very lavish of the finest marbles and metals. Minor decorative arts should be called into requisition everywhere, as freely as they have been in the new Houses of Parliament. Large pictures which cannot be seen near should be guarded by advancing enclosures of the most artistic *wrought*-iron railing, full of the most quaint and graceful fancies, and the name of the artificer himself, *not of the firm which employed him*, should be legibly engraven on the work and on the marble pavement in which it was fixed. All the floors should be of marble or encaustic tiles, and the utmost variety of design should be everywhere encouraged; *no two doors alike, no two pieces of railing alike, no two floor-patterns alike.* The doors should be of bronze, with a bas-relief in every panel.

As a Palace of Art ought to have a magnificent front towards Trafalgar Square, the low picture-shed (which I would always retain for its utility, however magnificently it might be finished), would not afford height enough to look grand from

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Charing Cross; therefore the whole site of the present building should be occupied by a very lofty edifice, four or five storeys high, comprising, first, the ground-floor, a vast entrance-hall giving access to all the corridors in the picture-shed, and furnished with the finest specimens of artistic furniture that could be collected: this hall should be hung with tapestry, and should contain, on tables, a collection of small works of art, such as statuettes, cameos, medallions, gems, &c. At each end of the hall a staircase should lead to the upper storeys, where the drawings and prints belonging to the nation should be exhibited in frames, and under glass, like those in the Louvre.

At least two long corridors in the shed should be devoted to Sculpture. All the sculpture now in the British Museum should be housed there. It greatly diminishes the effect of our national art collections to keep them divided; and as the British Museum is in great want of space, it would be a charity to relieve it. We have now, on the whole, a fine collection of sculpture, though still a very incomplete one; it cannot in its present situation expand farther, for it has already overflowed the building and occupied the colonnades outside. It is surprising that those who have influence in such matters should not be more eager to seize so excellent an opportunity for *uniting* our art collections, as this reconstruction of the National Gallery will offer. It is an opportunity that is not likely ever to occur again in our time. There appears to be an impression that sculpture, especially the Egyptian and Assyrian, is not so much of artistic as antiquarian and historical interest, so it is put in the British Museum, near the great national library. But the fact is, that no national gallery of art can be complete without a collection of sculpture, and also that the sculpture of Egypt and Nineveh, considered simply *as art*, is of the very greatest interest, and, in its own way, of most remarkable merit. The distinction between what ought to be put in the British Museum, and what in the National Gallery, is so easily made as to be self-evident. It makes itself. We have only to draw the line where *fine* art begins. All antiquities of the nature of fine art, and illustrating the history of fine art should be placed in the National Gallery; all antiquities, having historical, but *not* artistic interest, should remain in the Museum.

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As the study of art is very hard and tiring work, the comfort of visitors should be attended to. A desire was expressed in Parliament that there should be comfortable seats. This is very right; most visitors to the Louvre regret that capital ottoman which used to be before the great Veronese. But it is not well to put ottomans in the *middle* of rooms where pictures are exhibited: they often interfere with study. We wish to retire to a certain distance, and find the ottoman in the way. It is better to fix seats near the wall on each side. If the pictures were separated by broad clear spaces, a large easy-chair might be put, with its back to the wall, under each of those empty spaces.

There can be no doubt as to the style of architecture which we ought to choose. The perpendicular Gothic was right for the new Houses of Parliament, because peculiarly national, and fit to receive a great heraldic record of the chiefs of the nation. But no style of Gothic has any historical connection with good painting, or with any sculpture in which real form has been developed. All the traditions of modern painting and sculpture are inseparably interwoven with the *renaissance* movement in architecture. No Goth could ever draw the figure. The real study of the figure was itself a *renaissance* movement. *Renaissance* architectural forms occur continually in the pictures and studies of the greatest masters, Gothic forms hardly ever. Our Art Palace should be of *renaissance* architecture. All-powerful associations settle this for us. That architecture alone will permit of a consistent commemoration of art history. The front of our Palace should be a great record. On inserted slabs of marble should be inscribed the names of great artists, in legible Roman characters, and the names also of great patrons and friends of art. In a hundred niches should be placed their statues. And large panels might be filled with imperishable tile-paintings, or with works like De Triqueti's *Marmor Homericum*.

Proposals for a new palace in London are not likely to receive much consideration at a time when we have not yet quite recovered from certain feelings of disappointment and annoyance about the new Houses of Parliament. Much has been said against that building, both by people who hated architecture in general, and could not see the sense of spending so much "foolish money," and, on the other hand, by people

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who loved architecture, but did not love the perpendicular style. But the new Palace of Westminster is, on the whole, an effort of which we have many reasons to be proud. There was very much real grandeur in the idea, though Sir Charles Barry, like many men of talent, had power to plan a great work, but not invention enough to carry it through with that inexhaustible variety and fertility of resource in matters of detail which is the privilege of genius alone. It is not equal to the works of the *great* Gothic times; but I am not aware of any perpendicular architecture which is better. The objection to it is an objection to its style. Barry may have done wrong in choosing that style, but it was adapted to the habits of our workmen and the condition of our minor arts. Its enrichment is mechanical, but *we* are mechanical also. On the whole, we may accept the Houses of Parliament as the grandest achievement which in all likelihood could have been produced in the beginning of the Victorian age; and, so far from feeling ashamed of it, we have a right to congratulate ourselves that the legislature is housed with a grandeur befitting its great traditions. I have said elsewhere that the building was "a lamentable and costly example of mechanical enrichment," because I dislike that style; but I applaud the resolution to have as grand a building as we could get in our age, and the willingness to incur the necessary sacrifices. Let us persevere in the same large spirit with advancing power! Let us vote eagerly, as the old Florentines voted for their Campanile! Let us eclipse the Louvre! We are the richest nation in Europe; let us have the grandest Art Palace: we are the most practical; let us have the best!—1865.

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XVIII.

ON THE ARTISTIC OBSERVATION OF NATURE.

1. *How artistic sight differs from ordinary sight.*—Men are so constituted that they see only those aspects of things to which their attention actively directs itself. True seeing is never a consequence of the passive reception of impressions, but of active looking only. To look energetically we must consciously look *for* something—some object, or fact, or quality. If you have no aim in observation, you will see nothing and remember nothing; if you have an aim, you will see that which you look for, but no more.

Now, the difference between artistic sight and ordinary sight is occasioned by the fact that mankind generally do not look for those truths and qualities which artists look for. There is an unfortunate tendency in persons living habitually outside of Art to consider themselves contemptuously treated when we take it for granted that they are not likely to see, in the artistic sense of the word, so truly as we see, who have devoted our lives to that particular kind of looking. I desire to establish the distinction in the most decided manner; and yet to do so, if possible, without conveying to the unartistic reader the notion, which is entirely foreign to my thoughts, that his presumed incapacity to see, in the artistic sense, implies, in my conception, any degree of intellectual inferiority in him. Those who see artistically have necessarily purchased the faculty by a great expenditure of time; nor does it imply any general inferiority in others that they have devoted their hours to other objects. It is the business of artists to see artistically; it is the bounden duty of all who write on Art to learn

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to see in that manner; it is the happiness of all true amateurs; but it can never be considered a power necessary to humanity generally, nor a virtue indispensable to a blameless human life. But though I wish it to be understood that nothing can be more remote from my thoughts than any feeling of contempt for the millions of active and respectable persons who are, in the artistic sense, permanently blind; yet, at the same time, I may be permitted to express great regret that they should not be better aware of this. Their entire unconsciousness of deficiency in this direction leads them frequently to form estimates which are grossly unjust, and to use their influence in such a manner as to render their very possession of influence a misfortune. And yet this unconsciousness is inevitable. Let us only reflect how impossible it is that any human creature devoid of a sense should be able to conceive of it. Persons to whom red and green are the same colour live on for years in happy ignorance of their deficiency; nor do they, even after accident has revealed its existence to others, realize in their own minds the extent of their privation. When we possess a faculty in some minor degree, we are able to conceive of the existence of the same faculty in some more intense degree; but when we do not possess the same faculty *at all*, we are not able to realize what it is. For example, recollections of our boyhood may enable most of us to form some idea of the enjoyment of their own agility felt by monkeys when they throw themselves from branch to branch; but no recollections, no reflection, no dramatic force of insight into a foreign nature, can enable the wisest of us to feel for one moment, or for one moment to understand or appreciate, the fierce joy of a young tiger when his strong jaws first tear the living flesh. And there may be senses possessed by other animals even on this planet, or by creatures intellectually our equals in other worlds, so totally inconceivable by us, that we cannot form the remotest notion of what they may be. Just so unknown, so inconceivable, are the æsthetic senses to those who have them not.

Men use their eyes as channels of information about what they want to know. You want to know the hour, and you look at the clock; you are a farmer, and you look at the sky to see whether it will rain; you are a lady, and anxious to see whether your rival has as good lace or as fine diamonds as

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your own, and you give keen glances to ascertain the fact. If I am careless about the time, I may look at the public clock and not see the hour it marks; if the weather is out of my mind, I may look at the sky and read on it no prognostics; and, as I am not a lady, lace and diamonds may float and glitter before me without leaving any impression of their value. The eyes are discreet servants: they only tell us what we want to know.

It is an optical fact, easily proved, that no two men ever saw the same rainbow. It is an æsthetic fact, scarcely more difficult of proof, that no two men ever saw the same appearance in any object whatever. What men will see is determined beforehand by very complex conditions of faculties, experience, and education. That is why no natural scene is ever exhausted ground; a new artist coming to it will discover new material in it. Landscape-painters go in crowds to the same places—Bettws-y-coed, the Highlands, the Lake District, the Valley of Chamouni, the Roman Campagna—and fresh generations may go there for centuries; they will never use them up. On the other hand, what one sees another cannot see. That which is as plain to you as a closed turnpike-gate to a coachman on his box may be as invisible to me as a thread of gossamer in twilight.

If there are wide differences in this respect between artists and artists, still wider must be the difference between men trained as artists and the laity who have never devoted their time to the study of Art in a practical manner at all. The world in general—seldom thinking about beauty, not intending to paint, nor looking at nature with reference to Art—either does not see the æsthetic aspects of nature at all, or only sees them in disconnection, and without those ever-present counter-facts which the artist cannot at his peril for one moment overlook. What we call ordinary sight is not by any means all of one kind, but varies with our desires and our information. It may be broadly classed together, however, in this connection, as non-artistic, in opposition to that which is artistic. The non-artistic sight is penetrating, seeking always some special fact; the artistic sight is receptive, trying to grasp all the facts, so far as they are visible, yet no farther. This attempt at universal receptiveness, though all honest artists make it, is nevertheless doomed to eternal insuccess, as every

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artist is narrow in comparison with the immensity of nature—narrow, I mean, not only in comparison with the universe, but with the Spirit which pervades every fragment and detail of the universe.

This theory will account for the wide difference of taste which severs artists from the world. What pleases the people best is that which gives evidence of the qualities they most admire and approve; the qualities admired and approved by the *bourgeois* mind are wealth and order and cleanliness, *not* artistic feeling and invention. It results from this, that in buildings and furniture the *bourgeois* mind will always seek first for the expression of wealth and order and cleanliness, whereas these qualities are compatible with an entire absence of intelligence and taste and invention, for which the *bourgeois* mind cares infinitely less. Now, to the artistic eye, the costliness or cheapness of an object is always a matter of the most supreme indifference. A statue may be hateful and bad, though of pure gold; and a sketch in common modelling clay may be precious and beloved as a treasure, if it be only good Art. Order[1] hardly ever seems to artists to compose well (remember the litter in Rubens' pictures, and the foregrounds of Turner's pictures). Cleanliness has seldom so great a charm as the pathos and sublimity which exclude cleanliness; the cottages of the rustic poor are more pleasing to artists than the parlours of the prosperous middle classes; and gipsies on the march suit them better than gentlemen in a drawing-room. It is evident from this difference in taste between artists and the *bourgeois* world that there must be a wide difference in the things they look for and like to see, and hence just as wide a difference in the things or qualities they actually *do* see.

2. *That ordinary seeing may be blindness in the artistic sense.* —Not to see anything is, so far as that particular thing is concerned equivalent to blindness. That ordinary sight is blindness in the artistic sense is very easily proved. When people talk of learning to draw and paint, they ought rather to say they are learning to *see*, for that is the main object of artistic education. Beginners in drawing continually give

[1] I mean what the *bourgeois* mind understands by order. There is in every true artist an intense love of a far nobler and profounder order: every good picture, however seemingly careless in its arrangement, is, in fact, an example of noble order.

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proof that the uneducated eye scarcely sees at all in the artistic sense. They cannot see the proportions of things, they cannot see the true colours of things, they cannot see the relations of things. Forms which to an educated eye are obvious, the beginner does not indicate. If you are working from nature, your drawing, after making due allowance for the necessities of interpretation, is the accurate measure of your seeing; if you work from memory, your drawing is the measure of your power of recollection.

3. *That the faculty of artistic sight is to be acquired only by active artistic observation.*—Artistic sight is not a natural faculty, but is acquired artificially. There is, no doubt, a natural gift which enables some men to acquire the faculty more readily than others; and there are wide differences in the degrees to which men are capable of cultivating themselves; but notwithstanding the fact of the existence of genius, it is certain that no man, without educating himself or being taught by another, ever sees artistically. Artistic education gradually reveals nature to us æsthetically, and develops in us a new sense. Writers who have themselves never been educated artistically often deny this, and say that the "eye of the artist" is no better than their own. They may enjoy natural beauty, in some measure, without this education, and they may feel much and truly, but they cannot see artistically without artistic training. At the same time, the mere habit of looking at pictures is much, though practical drawing in addition to it is a great advantage.

4. *Utility of practical work in artistic observation.*—Practical work is chiefly useful because it fixes our attention, and takes it surely over the whole field. It is well known that if you have lost anything in an open place, the best way to find it is to divide the ground into small squares by cords, number the squares, and examine each one separately. So, if you make a careful study of any natural object, you ensure a thorough examination of it, and you can ensure it by no other means. It takes time to see anything artistically. The time required by a careful study compels you to look at the object long enough to learn something about it, which, under other circumstances, no human being would have the patience to do. When Ingres painted the Duke of Orleans, he stipulated for a hundred and fifty sittings, and so had time, let us hope,

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to study his royal highness's face.[1] Without the practical object of painting a portrait, no man would stare earnestly at another man's face for hundreds of hours. Still less would anyone thoroughly examine the details of a landscape.

Practical work is useful also for the constant comparison it forces us to make. The qualities of things are impressed upon us by nothing so strongly as by comparison. In merely looking at nature, we compare nothing, or at the best only one part of nature with another part; but in working actively, we continually compare our bad work with Nature's exquisite work, and so become much more acutely alive to the infinite beauty of the latter.

I believe that every reader who has drawn much will agree with me, that he knew nothing about the objects most familiar to him until he had drawn them. I have had a striking illustration of this in my own recent experience. Though long accustomed to a country life, and (in a very small way) an owner of horses and cows, I never knew anything accurately about these animals until two years ago, when I began to make studies of them with a view to painting. Indeed, I may very truly say that until last year I had never beheld an ox or a cow artistically at all, and, being clearly aware of this, postponed writing a projected article on Rosa Bonheur from the humiliating conviction, that, although living summer and winter on a large French farm, and intimately familiar with all the oxen on it, and their labours, personally friendly with them even, and calling them by their names, I had not yet, in the deep critical and artistic sense, *seen* them.

The best way to know anything about an object is to draw it over and over again in all its aspects. After that, whether we lose our drawing or not, does not much matter; we shall know the thing we have drawn, and know it in a manner of which no person who cannot draw is able to form any conception.

5. *That artistic observation may be, and usually is, very limited in its field.*—Even the best artists see only partially; the nearer they approach to universality, the better the work they do: still, even the very best are limited. The taste and knowledge of their contemporaries usually erect impassable barriers

[1] If we may believe Alphonse Karr. I have read elsewhere that the number of sittings *actually given* was eighty.

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around artists. If there is no feeling or desire for a certain order of truth on the part of the public, the artist will have no stimulus to study that order of truth; nay, if he does study and render it, he will incur insult and abuse, and be thereby driven back into the line of subject and treatment which his contemporaries understand. There is a belief amongst figure-painters, that if you draw the figure well you will, of necessity, draw anything else well. No belief could be less consistently supported by experience. Whatever their powers of draughtsmanship, men only draw those things well which they have seriously studied. What figure-painter ever drew the figure more tenderly and delicately than Leonardo da Vinci? Yet his landscape, considered as a representation of nature, is puerile; it is even occasionally ludicrous. And the landscape of Reynolds, even that of Gainsborough, though always pleasant in tone and suitable as a variously-tinted surface behind figures, how deficient it is in definite knowledge of natural objects! They never drew the fracture of a rock, nor the build of a tree trunk, still less the anatomy of a mountain. And in our own day, what school of painting has devoted itself most consistently and laboriously to form? The French school. And what artist of that school has, by the admission of all his contemporaries, most successfully reached the special aim of the school? Ingres. Yet the landscape design of Ingres (considered simply as *design*, and setting aside all question of colour and effect, to which he has no pretension) is entirely worthless. We have a hundred landscape-painters who can *draw* landscape better than Ingres, yet Ingres is called the high priest of form, and landscape-painters are usually considered to be ignorant of drawing.

Is there any particular kind of Art which in our day has afforded a proof of the limitation of previous artistic observation? Yes; the introduction of pure topography in landscape has proved that former landscape-painters have never accurately rendered the forms of natural scenery. The lowness of hills, the slight degree of steepness in lines that seemed nearly vertical, the comparative insignificance of features which formerly appeared so important that every artist enormously exaggerated them, the general length of horizontal measurements in proportion to vertical measurements; these are modern discoveries which prove to us in a manner not to be

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gainsayed, by the aid of demonstrations which cannot be disputed, that all previous landscape-painters have drawn landscape with a degree of inaccuracy so gross, that it would have been rejected at once by the public if this violent distortion and exaggeration of natural forms had not its reason in some deep-seated want or passion of the ordinary human mind. Even at this day, true topographic landscape is considered false, and careless sketching true, and it requires extraordinary manual skill, or the choice of scenery in itself of extraordinary natural grandeur, to make truth of design in landscape acceptable. Until within the last few years, no natural scene was ever drawn as it is; yet the art of drawing is by no means so recent. I think that this affords sufficient evidence that even general powers of design are not enough to make one see a special object truly.[1]

The reader who has himself studied topographically will believe this at once, or rather, not believe it, but *know* it for himself already; others, who have made no experiment on the matter, may prefer to take what they may consider the painted evidence of hundreds of excellent landscape-painters, and reject these verbal assertions. The evidence in my favour is, however, patent, and easily tested. Photography, being topographic, proves very much, but anyone may ascertain how false are the popular landscape forms by simply marking the chief lines of a hilly landscape on a pane of glass held up between him and the scene.

6. *That intense clear-sightedness is compatible with partial blindness.*—This follows from the preceding proposition, but it is well to insist on it separately as a warning. English artists are intensely clear-sighted as to surface and detail, but they are often blind to matters of equal if not higher importance, to facts which more closely affect unity. French artists are, as a body, clear-sighted as to constructive truth in figures and animals, but blind to the truths of colour and to con-

[1] Some critics have spoken of my own work as topographic. I have tried to do pure topography, but soon abandoned it for two reasons—first, the drawing, though demonstrably accurate, never satisfied any unprepared spectator; second, it never satisfied myself. After that I determined to draw landscape as it appeared to me, in a simple unreasoning frame of mind. To produce pure topography one must be in a highly artificial and self-conscious state of the coldest scientific tranquillity.

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structive truths in landscape. In Art we easily perceive the blindness of others, but do not so easily detect our own; if we began to be aware of it, that dawning consciousness would be a proof that our darkness was passing away, and the light of fresh truth breaking in upon us.

7. *Difficulty of finding out when we are ourselves artistically blind.*—There is a pretty theory that the spirits of the dead may often be with us in our daily life, but that the dulness of our grosser sense hinders us from beholding our ethereal visitants. Thackeray made use of a similar belief about fairies, and said that artists were enviable people who could *see the fairies* when others saw only what was commonplace and familiar. The difference between artists and others is indeed something as great as this, but not every artist sees *all* the fairies,—some only see fairies of quite an inferior rank. Let us pray that the best of beautiful spirits may become visible to us. How can we know how many may still be invisible? The only safe or progressive condition of an artist is to look at the world everywhere and every day with the humble hope and expectation of being permitted to see some new beauty and wonder there. Even in the things most familiar to us, there are yet a thousand discoveries to be made. Let us look at them always with untiring interest and curiosity. However successful as observers of nature, however famous as artists, let us humbly believe, what is most assuredly true, that with reference to very much of natural truth and beauty we are even yet in darkness! This is our only possible chance of getting to see more; but if we believe, as some do, that the whole truth is visible to us, the little we know will close round us like a prison, and the universe, for us, will narrow itself to the dimensions of a cell.

8. *Utility of advice from many artists.*—A good way of finding out where we are blind is to encourage many artists to criticise our work frankly in our own hearing. They will express opinions in direct contradiction with each other, and cause, perhaps, some degree of confusion in our own; but we shall hear, from time to time, some suggestion that will lead us to fresh observations and discoveries. Anyone who has really studied nature for himself is likely to have seen something that no one else has seen. Let us encourage him to tell us what that thing is, so that we also may get leave

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to see it. Every new friend who will tell us what his own observations have been may be as good as a new pair of eyes to us.

9. *Critical study of many schools.*—Artists record their observations in their works: the greater the variety of pictures we have the opportunity of studying, the better our chances of meeting with enlarging suggestions. Hence, the critical study of pictures may be an important part of the education even of the practical artist. It is likely, at least, to save him from the besetting danger of narrowness. He will learn how various are the aims of Art, and select for himself those aims which are at the same time most compatible with his own powers and most in harmony with his natural feelings and affections. One or two pictures by Constable, exhibited in Paris at a time when a new school of landscape was beginning to form itself amongst the younger men, sufficed to give a special direction to the efforts of that school, and their influence, transmitted through other minds, has not yet spent itself.

10. *Discoveries.*—It is for the advantage of Art, and conducive to its extension, that artists should be on the look-out for discoveries in the realms of nature, and led to pride themselves on such discoveries by the public encouragement and applause. This tendency is, on the whole, eminently beneficial by the increased stimulus it affords to all observation of nature, and by the increased interest of the very various Art which is called into existence by the desire to record discoveries worthily. At the same time, however, the love of discovery is not unaccompanied by its peculiar dangers. A consequence of it, very watchfully to be guarded against, is the habit of undervaluing truths long and commonly known, which, nevertheless, may be just as valuable as the new, whilst it is probable that they will be even yet more necessary. For example, the maxims which filled such works as those of Burnet being universally known to, and long accepted by, the world of Art, and whose general utility no reasonable man will be disposed to question, have of late years fallen into neglect, and even into something like contempt, because the recent discoveries of our younger school have turned men's minds away from them. So far as such maxims assume the rigidity of rules, it is indeed a thankworthy service to prove practically that they may safely be dispensed with;

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but if they pretend to no higher character than suggestions for artistic convenience, it is as well to give them the attention which the experience of former generations seems to show that they deserve. When tradition is evidently in opposition to natural truth, or even when obedience to it would hinder us from recording some truth unforeseen by our predecessors, the tradition ought unquestionably to give way; but when it compels us to no falsity, and restrains us from the pursuit of no veracity, it ought at least to be considered respectfully.

To this warning may be added another of an opposite character, yet equally necessary. The stupid opposition to discovery is at least as blameworthy as the too self-reliant independence of tradition. There are whole classes of persons concerning themselves with the Fine Arts, and very influential classes too, who systematically deny the merit of what is new, merely because it has not the authority of precedent. Whatever may be the necessity for precedent in the law, it is quite unnecessary in Art. If you have produced true and noble work of a kind for which there is a precedent, you have done well; but if you have produced equally true and noble work which is without precedent, you have done still better, and deserve not less honour and credit, but more honour, more respect, more serious consideration, on account of the greater originality needed for work in the execution of which you have not profited by the guidance of example.

11. *The art of making observations.*—An artistic observation must always be made according to a certain method and for some especial purpose. The most useful observations are those made to ascertain some particular truth about which we want to be quite sure: for example, if an artist is painting an ox in his studio, and, wishing to be right about the motion of a muscle in action, goes into the road and walks by the side of an ox for ten minutes to see the action of that muscle, it is probable that the observation will be more profitable to him than a merely vague and general survey of the movement of the whole animal. Observations may, however, be synthetic, and, indeed, they naturally class themselves under the two heads of analysis and synthesis; but when synthetic, they are intentionally so, the one condition of a valuable observation being that it shall have been made with a purpose.

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Observations are of little value without comparison: indeed without comparison the memory cannot retain their results. And in order that this comparison may be possible, it is necessary to note all those conditions under which each observation, in any way likely to affect its result, was taken. The value of observations, unlike that of most possessions, increases with their abundance: the more we possess of them, the more valuable each becomes, because the more light is thrown upon it. It is necessary in making observations to guard against the natural tendency to the exaggeration which comes of excitement, and to divest ourselves as far as possible of that kind of enthusiasm which, once satisfied of the existence of a fact, has no longer the impartiality necessary to test its value with precision.

12. *The discrepancy between clear observation and defective performance to be attributed to weakness of the memory.*—There is a common injustice in criticism against which we all ought to guard ourselves. It is often said of painters who, in their performance, visibly fall short of the truth, that they cannot see, or have not noticed the truth. It is very possible, however, they may have studied the facts with care, and observed them with perspicacity. Critics forget that between the moment when an artist sees an effect or a group in nature, and the moment when his completed picture leaves his easel, there is usually an interval of weeks or months, during which he has his memory alone to rely upon, if we except some slight memorandum, such as may be hastily scrawled in his note-book. Between seeing and doing there is a great gulf, and the difficulty is how to get the materials safely across it. Memory is the ferry-boat; but most people's memories are boats of very small tonnage, and many of the truths of nature are inevitably left behind.

13. *The art of retaining observations in the memory.*—There is, however, an art of memory by which a good deal may be done. First, we ought to learn by heart those characteristics of each natural object which are common to all its kind: for example, a figure-painter ought first to know by heart the structure of the male and female bodies generally, at different periods of life, from infancy to old age. These facts once mastered, he has no further occasion to trouble himself about the facts of structure which are common to all, and his atten-

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tion may now be exclusively occupied in noting the deviations from the type which constitute the individuality of his subject. When these deviations are strongly marked, he will remember them without difficulty, and by degrees his powers of observation and memory will become so keen, that very slight deviations will impress themselves strongly and be permanently retained. But if, on the other hand, the artist has not made himself perfectly acquainted with those facts of structure which are common to all, he has no standard of comparison in his own mind, and cannot measure the extent of the deviation. The great principle is to *possess standards* in the memory, and possess them thoroughly. Nor is this a matter requiring extraordinary mental gifts; it only requires patience and labour. It is recorded of Rosa Bonheur, that when she first began to study animals, she bought a sheep, and kept it always by her in a Parisian apartment. That sheep she studied in every detail till she knew it by heart, and no doubt it became her first standard. It does not much signify what we take for a standard, so long as we have one, if only it be not abnormal. The practical purpose is to carry always something in our own minds with which to compare the objects we see in nature.

14. *On scientific guidance in artistic observation.*—The Fine Arts owe a good deal to various sciences, and we may thankfully, up to a certain point, accept the hints which science offers. I should say that Art is seldom very far ahead of Science in scientific matters: for example, accurate discrimination in rocks did not precede our recent geological development, but was contemporaneous with it. The rational attitude of artists towards science is one of gratitude and docility, so far as science offers them useful help. It may save them many mistakes; but it is not to be relied on to the extent of superseding purely *artistic* observation. If we are too exclusively scientific, we are apt to mark too strongly the merely scientific truths, and neglect the artistic, as bad draughtsmen, who have studied anatomy, make figure studies which are nothing better than a mass of muscles and bones, divested of the delicate æsthetic appearances. So, in landscape, studies of rock and mountain might easily, in the hands of a merely scientific artist, degenerate into geological memoranda, marking only those truths which are interesting to geologists.

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15. *On the prevalent doubt whether artistic sight is of any use in ordinary life.*—It is of use in this way, that it opens fields of noble enjoyment, which without it are closed to us, and is therefore a definite addition to happiness. To men of the world artistic knowledge seems altogether vanity, because it seems to lead to no material results, except the making of pictures and statues, which men of the world consider one of the least important of our manufactures. But there is an argument in favour of artistic culture which has not yet been sufficiently insisted upon.

High artistic development is rare; but low artistic development is so common that we may safely call it universal. As P. J. Proudhon showed in his posthumous work on Art, as far as we attempt to beautify life in any way whatever, so far we are all of us artists. If you wear one single ornament—if you possess in your house one single object which is there for appearance alone, you are, so far, an artist, or a patron of Art. The ribbon and artificial flower in your wife's bonnet, the patterns on your wall-paper and your carpet, the bit of meaningless curvature that is carved on the top of your mahogany sideboard, the mouldings round the ceiling of your room, even the cheap printed stuffs worn by your women-servants—all these things are *Art*—they are low developments of it, but they are feeble early manifestations of the same instinct that has filled palaces with Art-treasures. Now, if I were addressing an audience of *bourgeois*, I should argue with them thus:—I should begin by showing them that even they, who professed to despise Art as frivolity, were compelled by their own natural instincts to have some of it nevertheless; and thence I should proceed to ask by what consistency they, who so encouraged Art in its lowest forms, could profess to despise it in its higher? Art, in one form or other, the whole human race must and will have: it is a necessity, and not a luxury. Even savages carve their spears and paddles, and decorate themselves and their belongings with shells and feathers. We argue, therefore, that since you *must* have Art, whether good or bad, it is better, considering the influence of Art on those who live with it, that you should live with good Art, and that artistic observation of the right kind will render a great service, by ridding you of the bad Art which must pervade the world until supplanted by better.

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The "practical man" has, however, the peculiarity that he considers low Art rational, and a fit object for a nation to spend millions upon; whilst noble Art he despises as trifling, and of no use. Calico-printing, for example, he considers eminently practical; but noble Art unpractical. With him all low Art *that can be manufactured*, is serious; noble Art, that cannot be manufactured, is frivolous and of no account. —1866.

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XVIII.

PROUDHON AS A WRITER ON ART.[1]

AMONGST all the discouraging facts about the public reception of the Fine Arts, there is not one so discouraging as the difficulty of finding out what people really think. The sameness of shallow profession that murmurs in our ears is a weariness to the soul. The orthodox in art, like the orthodox in some other matters, seem to find satisfaction in all acquiescence or verbal submission to their authority; they are pleased and contented when ignorance repeats, without either feeling or understanding, the consecrated formulæ; they are happy when anyone says what *they* think, and irritated if he says what he thinks himself. It appears that many minds like echoes better than all the other sounds on earth, and willingly pass their lives in listening to nothing else. Nay, so wedded are they to this strange taste of theirs, that they will listen to nothing else.

To all such—and alas! they are many—this book of Proudhon's is not to be recommended. The sounds that come out of it are not repetitions, but new voices, often flatly contradictory of our own, and of all others hitherto familiar in our ears. Proudhon was a very hard-headed, merciless disputant, far too sincere to be always pleasant, saying what he thought "in words like cannon-balls." One of his phrases, "*La propriété c'est le vol*," was more than a cannon-ball, it was a bombshell. It was not exactly true, but there was just enough truth in it to make it very terrible. The pages of his

[1] "Du Principe de l'Art et de sa Destination Sociale," par P. J. Proudhon. Paris.

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book on art are charged with smaller bombs that explode in our faces as we turn the leaves.[1]

Proudhon was "let loose on this planet" for the purpose of awakening discussion on those fundamental postulates which society likes to take for granted. Nobody would ever discuss these, if some bold thinker did not from time to time attack them. In the realms of social philosophy, and we may now add of art also, Proudhon served the purpose of "her Majesty's Opposition;" he was useful as resistance is to force. No force can be exercised without resistance, and, in intellectual matters, *real* resistance, such as Proudhon's, is very difficult to get. Ships that sail on water can go against the wind, because they have hold with their keels upon a resisting medium; but balloons, those ships of the upper air, are driven helplessly to leeward because no strong element withstands their flying cars. In common practical matters the resistance is supplied by material difficulties, and men may sail; in the intellectual region there is too often no such resistance, and they drift.

Before criticising these posthumous notes on art which Proudhon has left us, it is quite necessary, in order that we may understand them rightly, to comprehend the strange nature of the man.

If a great power evidently exists upon the earth, appearing in times and places far apart, and asserting itself victoriously as an influence strong enough to modify the existence of humanity, certain thinkers are satisfied that by the very fact of its wide and forcible action on mankind the power has a Divine authority, or is at least a natural product, and therefore to be examined respectfully. I am of this way of thinking, but Proudhon was not. Take, for example, the power of capital, and its exaction of tribute in the shape of interest. This power has not been created by the will of individuals, or the decision of governments; it grows everywhere naturally. Its strength may seem to us occasionally a temptation to certain forms of tyranny, which legislation has a right to guard us against, but we humbly recognize the power of capital as an

[1] It now appears that Proudhon never used this expression, which, however, is universally associated with his name. I leave it in the text, that this note may to some extent clear his memory of a doctrine attributed to him by his enemies.—1873.

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institution of the Supreme wisdom, and therefore cannot disapprove of it any more than we can disapprove of the natural collecting of water in lakes and seas. But Proudhon's mind was so constituted that he was capable of feeling the strongest moral disapproval concerning the central institutions of Nature. To hoard capital, in his view, was really a crime; and the exaction of interest robbery. Nor did he maintain these views because he was poor, and envied the rich. He had opportunities of becoming richer, and refused to profit by them from motives of conscience. Indeed, those English writers must have a very slight acquaintance with the private history of French Republicans who believe them to have been actuated by a motive so easily explained as mere envy. They were enthusiasts who had a faith, and for that faith they gladly suffered poverty, exile, and imprisonment, when the abandonment of it would have given them ease, and often have led them to much worldly prosperity.

This peculiarity of Proudhon's mind must be remembered when we read his criticism of art. Whatever offends his moral sense he vehemently opposes. Nothing is sacred for him but his own sense of what is right. There is a violence, a virulence, in his onslaughts which becomes most offensive if we lose sight for a moment of his peculiar point of view. But if we are irritated against him, it is evidence of a want of philosophy in ourselves. Proudhon wrote unreservedly what he thought; he might have abstained from writing, or he might have written what other people thought. It may be doubted whether he acted wisely in leaving for publication his ideas on art, a subject of which he had no special knowledge; but there cannot be a doubt that if we concede this, and leave him the choice between expressing his own opinions or other people's, it was his duty to us, his readers, to express his own.[1]

He had no diffidence, nor deference. But these are feelings rather useful to warn us off literary ground than to guide us when we are on it, pen in hand. Men of strong convictions are always liable to the accusation of want of modesty. They say what they believe, as if they not only believed but knew it.

[1] Proudhon wrote quite without literary artifice, and without social tact; but his absolute sincerity and the unceasing predominance of his moral sense are compensations for these defects, which are defects of art and not of character.—1873.

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Thorough belief has within itself an assurance equivalent to that of perfect knowledge. If a man has this, his writings will convey the impression that he is conceited when he is only convinced. There is immense assurance in Proudhon's manner, but it is only the language of genuine earnestness. Writers who are never in earnest about anything have a great advantage over him in this respect; they can cultivate at leisure the amiable art of modesty.

The first proposition of Proudhon which I should feel inclined to dispute, is the one on which he founds his position as an art critic; namely, the judicial competence of the uninformed spectator. The following paragraphs, translated and much condensed, contain the essentials of his argument:[1]—

"I know nothing by study or apprenticeship about painting, or sculpture, or music. I have always liked their productions as children like engravings. I am of that innumerable multitude which knows nothing of art; as to its execution, or of its secrets, which, far from swearing by a school, is incapable of appreciating manual skill, the difficulties overcome, the science of means and processes, but whose suffrage is the only one that artists aspire to, and for whom art creates. This multitude has the right to declare what it rejects or prefers, to signify its tastes, to impose its will upon artists. It may make mistakes, its tastes require to be awakened and exercised; but it is the supreme judge. It can say—and none may reply—'I command; it is your business, artists, to obey. For if your art repels my inspiration; if it has the pretension to impose itself on my fancy instead of following it; if it dares to refuse my decisions; if, in a word, it is not made for me, I despise it; with all its marvels, I repudiate it.'

"Nature has made us, as to ideas and sentiments, about equally artists. As the progress of knowledge is slow, and requires studies and efforts, so æsthetic education is rapid. Authority in art is inadmissible. It is enough for any man to consult himself to be in a position to put forth a judgment on no matter what work of art. This is how I have constituted myself an art critic, and I recommend all my readers to do the same.

"I judge works of art by the taste for beautiful things which is natural to us, and especially by what I have learned in literature. I have no æsthetic intuition, and it is only by reflection and analysis that I arrive at the appreciation of the beautiful. But it seems to me that the faculties of taste and understanding are not so far distinct that one cannot supply the place of the other.

"My quality of judge established, I do not hesitate to produce my decisions."

The theory that ignorant persons may judge of art is so popular that Proudhon will carry the suffrages of most readers

[1] In all extracts from Proudhon, in the course of this paper, I have condensed whenever possible.

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with him, and it is of little use to oppose him by argument, because his theory flatters the self-esteem of the public, whilst the contrary one wounds it. I by no means accuse Proudhon of uttering this doctrine *with a view* to flatter his readers, for he never condescended to any arts of that kind, but the doctrine is very agreeable to them. If you tell people that they are good judges of art, they like you for it, and willingly listen; if you tell them that they are incompetent, and leave them to infer that you consider yourself competent, they become animated by less kindly sentiments towards you, and attribute your unacceptable doctrine to personal arrogance and conceit.

To judge of any picture, statue, drawing, or engraving, three distinct kinds of knowledge are needed. First, an accurate acquaintance with the natural facts which ought, in that particular subject, to have been represented; secondly, some considerable practical acquaintance with the means employed to represent the facts; thirdly, a philosophical comprehension of the intellectual or imaginative element in the work.

Take, for example, a simple pastoral subject, the picture of "Ploughing in the Nivernais," by Rosa Bonheur, in the Luxembourg. The facts to be known by any writer who would criticise that picture include the construction and movements of oxen, then (in a less degree in this instance because they are clothed) the construction and movements of men, after that the construction of trees and earth, with the peculiar forms which the earth takes when it comes off the mould-iron, as Woolner says, "wave lapping wave without a sound." The sky, too, must have been studied, and it would be no disadvantage if the writer knew something about ploughs, and had seen ploughing in the country represented (the Nivernais), and were able himself to harness a yoke of oxen after the manner of the peasants in those parts, that he might know whether Rosa Bonheur had made no mistake in that matter. Then, as to colour, though the critic cannot be a colourist, he must have made coloured studies of oxen and ploughed land, or else he will have no notion of what the real colour of them is. Lastly, as to the philosophy of art, he must know enough of that to be able to assign its due place to the work in the history of art, and to determine how far it is imaginative and poetical, or, if only prosaic and observant, what sort of

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prose it is, and what separates it from other prose, such, for instance, as that of Courbet. Criticism is nothing else than the application of a set of tests, which tests are numerous and delicate in proportion to the information and feeling of the critic. These tests are not little rules easily learned, as some imagine, but results of elaborate knowledge of very various kinds. Now it *never* happens that a critic is in full possession of all the knowledge needed for just criticism; he has the means of applying one or two tests, it may be, but these are not enough for the complete estimation of the work. What is called the public estimation of a work depends ultimately on the success with which it may have passed the successive ordeals of different tests applied by critics of various competence. The weakness of most art criticism lies in its ignorance of those scientific and technical facts which supply the only accurate tests. Common criticism is a mere expression of personal liking or aversion, and deserves very slight attention indeed. Proudhon would elevate this criticism by ignorance to the rank of something serious that artists are bound to obey; that is, he would have Ignorance dictate to Knowledge. It has done so to some extent, but to a much less extent than Proudhon imagined; and every year the authority of Ignorance diminishes. The public now knows the difference, in England at least, between a critic who has grounds for what he advances and a writer who expresses merely his personal fancy or caprice, and it desires nothing so much as to find and follow competent guidance. The multitude is *not* the supreme judge. Its suffrage is *not* the only one that artists aspire to and for which art creates. True artists aspire to the judgment of those who are severally competent in the various specialities of criticism. When these have severally judged the work from their various points of view, a general conclusion as to its merit is drawn from the mass of their testimony; and this general conclusion, more or less modified by time, passes current always in the end. It is encouraging to remember the establishment of Turner's fame in spite of the popular verdict. He did *not* "obey" the multitude; he *had* "the pretension to impose himself on its fancy instead of following it;" he *did* "dare to refuse its decisions." The multitude "despised his art with all its marvels" and "repudiated it." And with what result? All the popular outcry and clamour

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were in vain: the few artists and connoisseurs who understood Turner silenced the thousands who could not comprehend him; and now, no thanks to any popular favour, his immortal name is engraven where they cannot efface it, high in the House of Fame. There is nothing in life more wonderful, more sublime, more cheering to our faith and hope, than the certain ultimate victory of *the few who know*.

Holding these views, believing that to produce art criticism of any value needs laborious preparation, it follows that I cannot allow to Proudhon, who was entirely ignorant of art, the title of art critic in any serious sense at all.[1] And yet it seems well that he should have left us his impressions on the subject, because he wrote so very sincerely, and sincere writing about art, by thoughtful persons, is lamentably rare. Proudhon at least tells us what an ignorant thinker worked out in his own head, and in the course of his thinking, by the sharp penetrating faculty of his mind, he got down to one or two obscure truths which are likely ere long to become widely known, at least to the more thoughtful class of readers. He was the first to announce in print the relation between some modern art and the new Positive Philosophy. He fished up *that* murex, and deserves great credit for it. His faculty as an art philosopher was naturally large, but there is no evidence that he appreciated artistic performance. I mean, that as a thinker he could grasp the historical relation of school to school; but as

[1] Proudhon says that he judges works of art "especially by what he has learned in literature." Many others do so likewise, and yet literary influences are often very misleading in regard to painting and sculpture, and they are so precisely because there is a great gulf between literary and pictorial or plastic conception, between the literary and pictorial habits of mind. For hundreds of years the literary habit of mind has been sedulously cultivated at Oxford, with the uniform result (until combated of late by other influences) of inducing a contempt for art and artists in combination with a sort of resolute ignorance disdainfully unteachable. The literary mind tries to extract its own sort of material from the works of painters; and when there is not much of that sort of material to be extracted, it says there is nothing in them. A taste for literature by no means implies any capacity for understanding art. I knew an eminent writer and editor, who lived in London, and who yet with all his scholarship, which was exceptional, and with all his taste, which in literature was both cultivated and refined, never felt himself attracted to the picture galleries, which he did not visit. Every reader of this book must have many acquaintances who have received a literary education and are utterly unable to understand the arts of design.—1873.

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an observer, I doubt whether he had that delicate insight whic can justly compare picture with picture.

Proudhon's assertion that authority in art is inadmissible is not absolutely true, but an important truth lies hidden in the loose and too general phrase. Any pretension to universal authority in art is inadmissible, because no human being in the course of one life can acquire the knowledge necessary to a universal art critic. But, on the other hand, authority on special matters naturally asserts itself, and is always recognized so soon as the grounds of it are ascertained. In a cultivated age authority on particular subjects is allowed to all who can give evidence of superior knowledge on those especial subjects. What Proudhon rebelled against in his heart was the authority of superiority; but such rebellion is always vain, because Nature herself instituted and ever sustains that just authority.

The place due to the Fine Arts amongst the occupations of men would naturally occupy a thinker who busied himself so incessantly with social questions. The following passages show how severely Proudhon regarded art and artists from his point of view as a social moralist:—

"Whether painters represent drunken priests as Courbet does, or priests saying mass like Flandrin, or peasants, soldiers, horses, or trees, or effigies of antique personages of whom we know next to nothing, or heroes of novels, or fairies, angels, gods, products of fancy or superstition,—in what can all that seriously interest us? What good does it do to our government, our manners, our comfort, our progress? Does it become serious minds to concern themselves with these costly trifles? Have we time and money to spare? Certainly, we practical and sensible people, not initiated in the mysteries of art, have a right to ask this of artists, not to contradict them, but in order to be edified about what they think of themselves, and what they expect from us. Nobody, however, seems to have given a clear answer on these points.

"Every two years,—formerly it was every year,—the Government regales the public with a great exhibition of painting, statuary, &c. Industry never had such frequent exhibitions, and she has not had them nearly so long. In fact, it is an artist's fair—putting their products for sale, and waiting anxiously for buyers. For these exceptional solemnities the Government appoints a jury to verify the works sent, and name the best. On the recommendation of this jury the Government gives medals of gold and silver, decorations, honourable mentions, money rewards, pensions. There are, for distinguished artists, according to their recognized talents and their age, places at Rome, in the Academy, in the Senate. All these expenses are paid by us, the profane, like those of the army and the country roads. Nevertheless, it is probable that no one, either on the jury,

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or in the Academy, or in the Senate, or at Rome, would be in a condition to justify this part of the budget by an intelligible definition of art and its function, either private or public. Why can't we leave artists to their own business, and not trouble ourselves about them more than we do about rope-dancers? Perhaps it would be the best way to find out exactly what they are worth.

"The more one reflects on this question of art and artists, the more one meets matter for astonishment. M. Ingres, a master painter, like M. Courbet, has become, by the sale of his works, rich and celebrated. It is evident that he, at any rate, has not merely worked for fancy's sake. Quite lately he has been admitted to the Senate as one of the great notables of the land. His fellow-townsmen at Montauban have voted him a golden crown. Here is painting, then, put on the same level as war, religion, science, and industry. But why has M. Ingres been considered the first amongst his peers? If you consult artists and writers about his value, most of them will tell you that he is the chief, much questioned, of a school fallen into discredit for the last thirty years, the classical school; that to this school has succeeded another, which in its turn became the fashion, the romantic school, headed by Delacroix, who is just dead; that this one has given way, and is now partly replaced by the realist school, of which Courbet is the principal representative. So that upon the glory of Ingres, the venerable representative of classicism, are superposed two younger schools, two new generations of artists, as two or three new strata of earth are superposed on the animals contemporary with the last deluge. Why has the Government chosen M. Ingres, an antediluvian, rather than Delacroix or Courbet? Is art an affair of archæology, or is it like politics, which has always been horrified by new ideas and walked with its eyes turned backwards in history? If so, then the last comers in painting would be the worst. Then what is the good of encouragement and recompenses? Let things go their own way, unless we would follow the advice of Plato and Rousseau, and ostracize this 'world of art,' sod of parasites and corruption."

All this seems severe, but is very easily answered. Happily for the human race, it is guided in the right direction by its instincts before it has learned to account for its own doings by philosophical reasoning. Those who possess the instinct which either creates or appreciates works of art do not need to quiet their consciences by any argument about the wisdom or utility of paying attention to the fine arts. The art faculty, like every other great faculty of our nature, carries within itself the assurance of its own lawfulness. If any argument is needed to satisfy those unfortunates who can only think and never feel, here is one, such as it is. Nature is always artistic; the very commonest things have artistic invention. A rose is beautiful and a toad is ugly; both are artistic. Now, so long as man's work is unartistic, it is a discord in the universe;

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hence art serves the purpose of bringing man and his belongings into visible harmony with nature. If you answer, "What is the good of being brought into harmony with nature? we don't care about artistic qualities even in nature itself;" we can only say that art does not work exclusively for you, but that very many other persons find in it a sensible benefit and an addition to happiness. It is easily shown also that art adds to human knowledge, by giving it visibility and precision.

These questionings of Proudhon as to the utility of art are, however, rather introductory to his own answer than the real questionings of an inquirer who could give no answer and believed that none could be given. Proudhon defines art as "*an idealist representation of nature and ourselves with a view to the physical and moral advancement* (perfectionnement) *of our species.*" This is one of the best definitions hitherto constructed. It includes natural truth, idealism, landscape art, figure design, and the influence of art as drawing attention to, and leading towards, the improvement of our physical and moral life. It misses, however, the affections and sentiments which cause the production of all art that touches us closely. Art is the expression of the artist's delight in what he sees or imagines, and an attempt to communicate the same delight to others, with a view to their sympathy and applause. Then Proudhon considers the æsthetic faculty one of secondary rank, merely an auxiliary in the development of humanity, rather a feminine than a virile faculty, and predestined to obedience. Here also he is undoubtedly right from the political or social point of view, which estimates faculties according to their direct governmental power. The æsthetic power influences only those who by their natural constitution are created the subjects of such influence; its weakness lies in the fact that it only governs those who are willing to be governed. Political power, on the other hand, governs also the unwilling. The difference between the two may be accurately estimated by the difference in national importance between the Royal Academy and the House of Commons. But, on the other hand, considered apart from the question of power over others, I am not sure that the æsthetic faculty, especially when in its highest form of artistic invention, can be considered a secondary or an unmasculine faculty. Be assured that to paint a great picture or write a great poem is manly work in the strongest sense.

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Shakespeare and Michael Angelo were certainly manly; and however firm our manhood, it is never too mighty for the great claims which the exigencies of noble art make upon it.

The wisdom of such governmental encouragement of art as Proudhon questions may indeed be doubted, but the course pursued by the Emperor in selecting Ingres for honours rather than Courbet, or even Delacroix, is marked by Louis Napoleon's usual tact and prudence. Ingres may be an "antediluvian," but his merits, such as they are, have the advantage of universal recognition, whilst the merits of Delacroix and Courbet are strongly disputed. The great evil of all governmental recognition of contemporary art is that persons in authority can only honour "safe" men, and these are seldom the greatest, *never* the most original. Callcott was a safe man and got knighted; Turner was not a safe man, and thirty years ago any official recognition of him would have excited much clamour, which would have caused the common people to doubt the judgment of their rulers. Besides, it does not follow that antediluvians should be necessarily worse than their successors; their only fault is to have aimed at qualities now no longer in fashion amongst artists; but these qualities may nevertheless be desirable, and to have aimed at them may have been to render permanent service to the arts, even though they are for the present temporarily lost sight of in the pursuit of more novel aims. As to the fitness of the *kind* of honour bestowed on Ingres there is still, however, room for doubt. The fine arts do not teach men how to govern a country; and the severe study of form, which is Ingres' *sole* claim to consideration, is not enough to make him vote wisely on such questions as will come before him in his senatorial capacity.

Proudhon's conception of art was large. He perceived the immense extension of the æsthetic faculty in man. He saw that not merely painting or sculpture, but everything that aims at the adornment of life, springs from that faculty. The truth is, that whenever we decorate a building or a piece of joiners' work with the simplest moulding, whenever we enrich our dress with the least bit of braid or ribbon, or even put a wild flower in a button-hole, we are attempting to give satisfaction to the artistic instinct. A manufacturer at Oldham put a cornice round the top of his factory at a cost of 1,500*l.*

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That was poor art, but it was an attempt at art, and sprang from the instinct which erected the frieze of the Parthenon. The duty of artists and writers on art is to guide this blind instinct to a rational activity. Thus we might suggest to a savage, that instead of carving and staining his own face, he would do better to carve and stain wooden furniture; and it is the duty of every writer on art in the present age to tell the people who invent the prevalent fashions in female dress, that although the desire for becoming costume is a right instinct, the existing *mode* is a disease of it.[1]

Proudhon's chapter on the Ideal is somewhat unsatisfactory. So far as I understand the Ideal, it is the typical or perfect form to which nature tends. But there may be various ideals; indeed, they are infinitely numerous. Nature never quite reaches them in any individual creature, but very clearly indicates them. Proudhon believed that there is Idealism in everything, even in a photograph of raw butcher's meat chopped in pieces. I confess I see no Ideal whatever in nature or in photography, but only hints giving us a clue to the Ideal. It is scarcely worth while, however, to discuss this point, on which there exists little difference of opinion amongst artists. The difference which *does* exist, and which distinguishes modern art from the antique, is that we recognize a greater quantity or variety of ideals than the ancients did. This is of importance, because it makes our aims more various and our judgments more liberal than theirs.

"For philosophers and *savants*," says Proudhon, "the mode of expression ought to be rigorously exact. Artistic expression, on the other hand, is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory. So that the slavery to the pure idea which characterizes philosophy, science, and industry, is just what destroys the æsthetic sentiment, the ideal, whilst artistic licence gives birth to it.

"The object of art is *not* merely to make us admire beautiful things. The attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist. Our moral life consists of quite other things than this superficial and sterile contemplation. There are the variety of human actions and passions, prejudices, beliefs, conditions, castes, family, religion, domestic comedy, public tragedy,

1 This alludes only to the fashions of 1866. Since then female dress has occasionally been both rational and graceful, but it never remains long in any condition which an artist or philosopher could approve; and instead of dwelling contentedly in *suitable beauty*, always flies off again into the wildest extravagances.—1873.

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national epic, revolutions. All that is as much matter for art as for philosophy.

"Art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative."

All that is very true and good; one or two phrases are even deep and show unusual insight. The way in which Proudhon defines the change which the Fine Arts love to make in all their materials is very accurate. "Artistic expression," he says, "is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory." His other assertion, that "the attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist," is more likely to be disputed. Beauty and pleasure are considered by many to be the end of art; truth the end of science; morality the end of philosophy; whereas Proudhon, being a seeker after truth, and a moralist, will have it that art also should seek after these things. I reserve the discussion of this point till we come to Proudhon's more elaborate development of his doctrine. The last sentence, "Art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative," expresses a truth too often lost sight of by such critics as Proudhon himself, who forget that the particular truths and concrete forms of art can only be met by particular and, so to speak, concrete criticism. Vague abstractions, or even abstractions which, considered philosophically, are not vague, aid us little in our attempts to estimate productions which always come before us with definite forms. Philosophy, or at least the broad philosophical spirit, is a necessary element in good art criticism, but the knowledge of special facts is also indispensable to anyone who would speak of an art which is "essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative."

Proudhon is less happy in a curious attempt he makes to distinguish the Ideal from the Idea.

"The Ideal is distinguished from the Idea, because the Idea is an abstract type, whilst the Ideal is the clothing given to the Idea by the imagination or sentiment. For example:—

"IDEA: It is safer to live in an humble condition than in a high one. *Ideal:* Fable of the oak and the reed; combat of the rats and the weasels, when the princes of the rat army, with their plumes, not being able to get into the holes, were all massacred.

"IDEA: Maternal tenderness. *Ideal:* a hen and her chickens; the pelican; opossums; a woman giving suck to her child; the lion at Florence."

This is *very* wide of the mark. Proudhon first gives an abstract moral notion, and calls that the Idea; then an artistic illustration of it in visible shape, and calls that the Ideal.

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Turning to Liddell and Scott for reference to a Greek author who employed the word ἰδέα in something like its modern artistic sense, I find that "in the Platonic Philosophy the ἰδέαι were not only εἴδη, but something more, viz. *the perfect archetypes, models* or *patterns* (Lat. *formæ*), of which, respectively, all created things were the imperfect *anti-types* or *representations.*" The word ἰδέα, in art at least, does not mean a thought or a moral proposition, but a *form* seen in the mind. So far as a work of art realizes this inner vision, it is ideal. Realism is the surrender to outward vision; Idealism is the surrender to the inward vision. Proudhon's examples of ideals are not necessarily ideals at all; they might have been examples of servile realism. He confounds thought and ideality, just as our vulgar language continually confounds them. People say that they have ideas when they have only thoughts. By an extension of meaning which is metaphorical we talk also of musical ideas, because our language is not critically accurate enough to have a special word for that which the musician *hears* in his imagination. Proudhon's "ideas" are only thoughts, or moral notions; and his "ideals" only instances, or illustrations. But when Phidias imagined Jupiter, he saw in his mind a true artistic *idea;* and when he wrought the great image in ivory and gold, he made a work which, as an attempt to realize that idea, was, so far as he approached it, ideal.

Since Proudhon was before all things a moralist, seeking a definite moral utility in every thing, and approving every thing only just so far as it seemed to him helpful to moral progress, and since he by no means loved or understood art for itself, but only as a force or influence which might ameliorate men, it is evident that the principle of *art for art* must have been, in the highest degree, repugnant to him.

"*Art for art*, as it has been called, not having its lawfulness in itself, and resting on nothing, *is* nothing. It is a debauch of the heart and dissolution of the mind. Separated from right and duty, cultivated and sought after as the highest thought of the soul and the supreme manifestation of humanity, art, or the ideal, shorn of the best part of itself, reduced to nothing more than an excitement of fancy and the senses, *is the principle of sin, the origin of all slavery, the poisoned source whence flow, according to the Bible, all the fornications and abominations of the earth.* From this point of view, the pursuit of letters and of the arts has been so often marked by historians and moralists as the cause of the corruption of

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manners and the decadence of states; it is for the same reason that certain religions—Magism, Judaism, Protestantism—have excluded it from their temples. Art for art, I say, the verse for the verse, the style for the style, the form for the form, fancy for fancy; *all these vanities, which eat up an age like a disease, are vice in all its refinement, evil in its quintessence.* Carried into religion and morality, that is called mysticism, idealism, quietism, and romanticism.: a contemplative disposition where the most subtle pride unites itself with the most profound impurity, and which all true practical moralists have opposed with all their energy—Voltaire just as much as Bossuet."

This passage is so powerful, so full of conviction, so strongly coloured with the little crystal of truth, which is dissolved and disseminated in so much hot water of fanaticism, that very many good people on reading it would succumb at once, and never dare to oppose to such stern and lofty morality the resistance of reason and common sense. Let us examine for one moment what the principle of art for art really is. It simply maintains that works of art, *as such*, are to be estimated purely by their artistic qualities, not by qualities lying outside of art.[1] For instance, the comparative poetical rank of Byron and Bowles is not to be settled by a comparison of their religion and morality, but of their art. Leslie used to say that he remembered a versifier who considered himself a better poet than Byron, because Byron's works often offended against morality, whereas his own were perfectly unexceptionable on that score. But amongst true critics, however desirable purity may appear to them, poetry is judged as poetry, painting

[1] It is probable that if Proudhon were alive to answer me, he would say that his objection refers less to the spirit in which works of art are *estimated* than to the spirit in which they are *produced*; that an artist who works for artistic ends alone is a lost being, whereas an artist who works for moral ends is always safe. Unfortunately for this view, it happens that when art makes itself secondary to any moral or intellectual purpose, it almost always, as if of necessity, loses quality as art, and very frequently sinks so low (artistically speaking) as to get beneath the level of all that deserves the very name of art. The reader may remember Cruikshank's large painting against drunkenness; that was a painting with a praiseworthy moral purpose, but it was not a *picture* at all. (I have called it a "painting," because any piece of canvas covered with paint is entitled to that designation.) On the other hand, I remember many pictures of drunken and immoral satyrs, by the great masters, which were not produced with that honourable wish to combat moral evil and help moral good which animated Cruikshank, and yet were truly *pictures*, and as such are rightly considered treasures, whilst Cruikshank's work is worth as much as the last teetotal lecture, and no more.

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as painting, music as music, art as art. So we say that naughty Alfred de Musset was a poet, because he wrought exquisite poetical work; and we say of good Mr. Tupper that he is not a poet, because he has not those qualities of ear and intellect and imagination which are necessary to make one. If Mr. Tupper were very naughty, and poor Alfred de Musset a canonized saint in heaven, that would not in the least affect our estimate of them as artists. It is in vain to write Jeremiads against this. A painter who paints supremely well, however few or feeble the moral lessons he inculcates, is sure of applause and immortality. What moral lesson did Rubens teach? What sermonizing is there in Titian? Even their sacred subjects are merely treated as artistic *motives*, and how utterly worldly they both were, how fond of pomp and vanity, how full of the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life! Yet they are the princes of art; and the preachings, and the teachings, the inculcated lessons, the elaborate allegories, the everlasting impertinences of inopportune counsel that fill our modern exhibitions, will all be swept into deserved oblivion, whilst these great men remain.

When Proudhon says that "art for art has not its lawfulness in itself, and rests on nothing," he forgets that art rests upon nature, and that truth is essential to it.[1] The two great artists whom I have just instanced as famous for purely artistic qualities were pre-eminent for their marvellous powers of observation, and memory, and vividly truthful imagination. They are great because they saw so much, and remembered so much, and because, when they imagined, they imagined with such astonishing veracity, and could so splendidly set forth outwardly on canvas what they had first seen inwardly. Art *has* its own lawfulness, which is dual,—namely, the law of natural appearances and the law of artistic exigencies,—and both these laws are so vast and so complex that it takes half a lifetime to learn them. No wonder that writers like Proudhon, who practise and advocate the art criticism of pure ignorance, should not even be conscious that these great laws exist.

And even in such technical matters as the laying of a touch, or the judgment with which glazing and impasto are employed,

[1] Truth understood very largely and even loosely, but not truth at all in the sense of accuracy.—1873.

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or the prudence of using light or dark grounds; or whether it is better to get light transparently *through* the colours or opaquely upon them, whether in water-colour it is better to use the sponge or forego it, whether in etching it is better to obtain darks by depth of biting or by multiplicity of lines,—all such questions as these depend for their solution on the one law, that *the best method is always that which best renders the highest order of truth consistently with the permanence of the work.* So that even in the way we estimate the most purely technical qualities of handling there is an understood reference to nature. What we call *quality* in work is a very great thing, and implies very great knowledge and observation of nature. Quality does *not* rest on nothing. If a man can spread half a dozen square inches of canvas with oil paint in such a manner as to put what we call quality into it, that man has studied nature for years and years.

And again, when writers like Proudhon consider the art of painting as of itself mere dissoluteness of the mind, they wholly forget the severe discipline that is necessary to success in it. This mistake is especially frequent in men who, having only gone through the usual discipline of school education, consider the fine arts idleness. Latin and Greek are discipline, they *know*, but art is only "mental debauchery." If such men would try to learn to draw in good earnest, they would find out whether art is a discipline or not. Are these gentlemen aware that ignorance lower than theirs looks upon their own pursuits as they, in their ignorance, look upon the pursuits of artists? Peasants and field-labourers almost always consider mental labour pure idleness. You and I may find a difficult author very hard work, but the ploughman over the hedge thinks we have a pleasant idle time of it in our easy chairs.

Proudhon makes a good and valuable distinction between personal and impersonal work. The official articles in the *Moniteur* he gives as instances of impersonal work, Michelet's "History of the Revolution" as personal. Men of genius, who always have a strong personality, hate doing impersonal work; and instinctively select those occupations where their personality may exercise itself with effect. On the other hand, it is a decided advantage to men without special genius to follow what may be called more impersonal occupations; they

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shelter themselves behind the strong shield of custom or officialism. Fine art never ought to do this; it should always be frankly personal; so ought most literature. Proudhon is right when he says that by his own personality the artist acts directly upon ours, that he has a power over us like that of the magnetizer over the magnetized, and that this power is stronger and stronger as the artist is more and more energetically idealist. To reduce this true doctrine to a concentrated expression, we may put it that the influence of an artist is in proportion to the energy of his ideality.

In a few short chapters, Proudhon rapidly outlines the history of art. Egyptian art, according to him, is altogether typical, aiming only at the fixing of types; Grecian art is the worship of form; Middle Age art is asceticism; the Renaissance was a rehabilitation of beauty, an ambiguous idealism; then the Reformation brought about the humanizing of art, by reducing it to seek its material in common life. Rembrandt, according to Proudhon, was the Luther of painting. Then came the French Revolution, with the great war of the classics and romantics; after that a long period of utter confusion and irrationality, out of which anarchy sprang at last the new school of *Realism*, which Proudhon regards as the final salvation and renovation of art, the principle which is ultimately to place it on a positive basis in perfect harmony with the rational spirit of modern intelligence.

It is especially interesting to find in this historical summary what Proudhon thought of that great and fruitful movement in art, the Renaissance. He considered it to have been a reaction against the asceticism of the Middle Ages, and then a development of Catholicism triumphant. The art of the Renaissance was the outward splendour and blossoming of the full-grown sovereign Papacy. Borrowing its means from Grecian art, it worked for the glorification of Papal Christianity. In this Proudhon sees nothing unnatural; Paganism had filtered into Christianity. "All religions have a common basis, and on the whole there is but one religion. What is made matter of reproach to Italian Christianity has happened more or less everywhere; every people has retained, in embracing the new religion, as much as possible of its old superstition. Northern asceticism never got down to Italy, which always remained more Pagan than the rest of Europe."

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Proudhon does not see much resemblance between the Venuses of ancient art and the Madonnas of the Renaissance; he is "in love" with the (female) saints of Raphael, but not with the antique goddesses. He has warmer sympathy with Gothic art, however, though "ascetic," and considers that it

"asserted itself with as much power as its predecessors and more sublimity. The Renaissance remains inferior to it on the grounds of geniality, originality, and artistic idea, because in the immense majority of its productions it had for its object to ally together two most incompatible things—the spirituality of the Christian sentiment, and the ideality of Grecian figures. This mixture of Paganism and Christianity, besides being an inevitable reaction against Catholic asceticism, had its utility, if only to remind us of antiquity, reconnect the chain of the ages, form the artistic communion of the human race, and prepare us for the Revolution. But it was not the less an entirely secondary task.

"What characterizes the art and time of the Renaissance is the want of principles, or, if you prefer it, a tolerance incompatible with the ardour of a conviction. The Church Triumphant has entered into her repose and her glory; it seems as if the purifying times of suffering would never more return to her. Whether from quietism or indifference, she protects equally works frankly Pagan and mystical conceptions. A mixture of Paganism and spirituality, the art of the Renaissance, like that of the Greeks, arrived at the idolatrous worship of form."

At the conclusion of the chapter Proudhon strongly objects to the figures of Christ executed at the period of the Renaissance; he does not like them at all, likes M. Renan's Christ still less, and wants a revolutionary one of the temper of Danton and Mirabeau.

On the whole this is a rational and philosophical way to speak about the Renaissance. During our recent heat of reaction against that movement very many of us have lost sight of its true character. Modern Liberals ought to look back to the revival of classical literature, and the practical imitation of classic art which followed it, with feelings of especial and peculiar gratitude. It is to that movement that we all owe our modern intellectual emancipation. This is proved by the ardent hostility with which the enemies of modernism assail the Renaissance, and by their untiring endeavours to bring it into general discredit. It is true that the Renaissance led to a period of licence in manners; its palaces were not houses of purity, nor its great luxury without sin; but it seems unhappily inevitable that every successive effort towards intellectual emancipation should be followed by

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temporary licentiousness of life. If this is really inevitable, it is to be regretted; but the mind of humanity must and will advance, in spite of these occasional disturbances of moral equilibrium. There are signs even now of something of this kind preparing itself for us, a new intellectual movement which is likely to be accompanied by some relaxation in conduct. What is certain is, that, without the Renaissance and the secular studies which it fostered, modern science and modern art would have been still unknown to us, and Europe would have stiffened into a Gothic China or Japan.

But the Renaissance, in turning towards the literature and art of the ancients, fell into empty idealism, an idealism of externals. The art of the great time of the Renaissance had little apparent connection with the actual life of the age it flourished in. Proudhon quotes a saying, attributed to Raphael, that the business of art is not to represent things as Nature makes them, but as she ought to make them; and Proudhon attributes the curious mixture of Catholicism and Pagan mythology which distinguishes the art of the Renaissance to this spirit of idealism, which was also the cause, in his opinion, of the moral corruption which immediately followed that movement.

The effect of the Reformation upon art was to make it condescend to illustrate the actual life of its own time. It resisted the new Paganism into which art had thrown itself, and drove artists to paint what they saw by closing the fields of idolatry and idealism. The title of Proudhon's chapter on this subject explains his view in one word, "La Réforme; *l'art s'humanise.*" The art of the Renaissance may have been Divine, but it would not condescend to be human; aiming at what its professors thought God ought to have done, it failed to perceive the qualities of what He *had* done. Hence Proudhon gives a far higher place to Rembrandt than to Raphael, puts Rembrandt and Luther together, and Shakespeare along with them in a trinity of reformers. What he likes in Shakespeare is not so much his idealism as his true sympathy with common life and clear understanding of it. Proudhon regrets very much that France did not join this movement, and by no means approves that tiresome pedantry which even down to our own day has led Frenchmen to ape the ancients.

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The war of the classics and romantics is not unfairly described by Proudhon. The following passages contain, I believe, all that is most valuable in the argument of each party:—

"The romantics reproached the established tradition with two things: the first, with setting aside fifteen centuries of history, whence the narrowness of its thought, and the want of life and originality and truth in its works; the second, with not even understanding its models, and being thereby thrown into endless contradictions. Is the history of Christendom nothing? said they. Is it not as much matter for poetry as the Pagan mythology and wars? And if it is artistic material, why are we to confine ourselves to the limits of your classics? And then, with your worship of classic form, which is your ideal, you sacrifice *expression* which is not less important, and so fall into conventionalism and monotony. The ancients carved their calm gods because they believed in them; we, who seek action and life, common labours and civic duties, cannot accept them as models.

"The classics argued that art is absolute, universal, and eternal; that its rules, which are the laws of the beautiful, are, like the rules of logic and geometry, immutable; that the ancients practised them because they understood them, and hence left us incomparable works; that there is only one and the same art in which nations more or less succeed; that the revolutions of history do not necessitate revolutions in literature and art, as the *Renaissance* artists proved; that to abandon a tradition, consecrated by so many masterpieces, would be to retrograde, and substitute the worship of the commonplace for the worship of form; finally, that if the new school thought it could excel the old, it had better try, and would then be judged by its performance."

This last challenge, as Proudhon remarks, it was dangerous to accept. Old systems which have produced their full quantity of fruit always contemptuously invite young systems to show theirs; and when there is little or none to show, they would have it believed that the immature system is permanently unproductive. The *Renaissance* had produced its fruit; romanticism was only just beginning to produce, so that any comparison on such ground was unfair. In these days we all see that romanticism was less a system than an emancipation, and that its greatest service is to have opened the way to the universality of modern naturalism. Classicism was a theory of limitation and restraint; romanticism a deliverance from this; naturalism is a boundless study of human life and the external world. Traces of the two first linger yet in art, and some elderly men, on the rare occasions when those once mighty watchwords are pronounced in these days, may even

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still feel a lingering ardour of partisanship, such as that great controversy kindled in their youth; but for the coming generation that war will be as much matter of history as the Wars of the Roses.

The part of Proudhon's book which will be read with most interest is that extending from the tenth chapter to the conclusion. The first nine chapters are full of principles and doctrines, of which I have just given an abridged statement; but in the tenth Proudhon enters on the direct discussion of the merits of modern painters. His first care is to define the two chief elements of every work of art, reason and taste, and to affirm that criticism ought to possess these two qualities to be able to meet and measure them duly. In the word "reason" Proudhon understands both sciences and morality; what he calls "taste" includes everything that is to be measured by the æsthetic faculty. I doubt whether he realized the full importance of the sciences which treat of natural *aspects;* he was certainly under the impression that a man might write art criticism without them. And I doubt, farther, whether Proudhon rightly saw the limits of taste; probably he included under that head much that belongs to the higher faculty of invention, and to the more common gift of simple observation. However, taking the two words in his sense, we are to understand that in his criticism he insists always on the moral and rational side of art, and presents more reservedly his æsthetic judgments, which, he feels, may be simply personal. This is the way he himself puts it; a barer statement would be that he does not judge art as an art critic at all, but as a reasoner and moralist.

Proudhon is very angry with Eugène Delacroix because that painter had the misfortune to aim at the rendering of his own personal impressions, and to say so. This is resented as the height of artistic presumption. An artist, according to Proudhon, is not to render his own impressions, but those of the public—those of P. J. Proudhon in particular, as one of the public. The artist is to embody, not his own ideas, but the collective ideas of his time.

This is one of those pleasing theories which the vulgar are always so ready to accept. They like to flatter themselves that men of genius, after all, are not their teachers, but their servants and interpreters. "It is we," they delight to believe,

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"who have great ideas; the business of artists is to embody our conceptions, as the business of writers is to register our opinions." It is true that much writing and painting attempts only this, and succeeds; but it is also certain that great men aim at something more than this. Delacroix certainly did, and so far gave evidence of greatness. Not that his art seems to me really grand and noble; it is too agitated, too feverish, too full of morbid and false energy. Even his colour, which it is the fashion to admire, is generally violent and crude, and his composition often singularly awkward.[1] With better health, and less irritability of nerve, he might have been a great artist, but he had not the calm of a mighty painter. Proudhon objects that he painted a great variety of subjects which he, Proudhon, does not care about, and then asks, "Comprend-il mon idée, sent-il mon idéal, saisit-il mon impression, à moi profane, qu'il s'agit surtout d'intéresser, d'émouvoir, et dont on sollicite le suffrage?" The objection to this style of criticism is that it attributes far too much importance to the personal predilections of the critic. What do we care about Proudhon's "*idéal*" when we are studying Delacroix? For any critic to say that a painter is irrational merely because he does not realize his, the critic's, own impressions is a monstrous impertinence.

Proudhon is severe on Ingres for his "stupid" work. The truth is that Ingres is wholly unintellectual. Long labour and a narrow obstinacy have given him unusual skill in drawing the muscles (which, nevertheless, as in the picture of St. Symphorien in the Cathedral of Autun, he often violently exaggerates), but no painter of great fame is so mindless. I have not seen his "Vierge à la Communion," but am fully disposed to believe all that Proudhon says against it as a pretty young girl *posing* charmingly, whereas it is evident that when Mary took her first sacrament, it being after the death of

[1] I leave this criticism on Delacroix as it was written, because it is quite just and true, but wish to add the observation, that, although his colour "is generally violent and crude," it led up to very fine colour in a few of his best works, especially the *Marino Falièro*, which is one of the most perfect examples of thoroughly fine *painting* in the world. On the other hand, the public has recently seen an example of the awkwardness of his composition in the *Sardanapalus*. Delacroix had a truly artistic mind, and saw and felt as an artist should see and feel, but he was too impetuous.—1873.

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Jesus, she must have been at least fifty years old, and, having borne great sorrow, could scarcely have retained that early charm which grief and time so certainly wear away. I have not seen this picture, but I remember the Virgin in the same painter's "Jesus disputing with the Doctors," a face without character and without emotion, like the visage of a Baker Street wax-work; and I remember the central figure, the boy Jesus, a conception so commonplace that any religious print-seller will offer you a hundred such. The high-water mark of Ingres' art was reached in the *Source*, where all his fine knowledge of form was called for, and not one ray of intelligence.

There is an elaborate criticism of Léopold Robert. His pictures of Italian peasants have long been very popular in France, where they are rendered familiar by engravings. They have a great charm, an infinite grace of composition and delicate sense of beauty. No artist ever more admirably rendered the harmony of moving forms. His groups are arranged with such consummate art, that no limb, however joyously active, violates the profound accord. Hence we yield to these works as we yield to beautiful music; they are the music of forms in motion. We are filled with a deep satisfaction, and are glad that an order so exquisite should thus be arrested for ever. For in the actual world of men, beautiful groupings like these are scarcely seen ere they shatter, but in the works of a painter like Léopold Robert the elastic limbs hold themselves unweariedly, and the fair forms bind themselves together in a permanent edifice of grace.

Whether Italian peasants ever *do* arrange themselves so felicitously, whether their limbs are so delicately moulded and their faces so ideally beautiful, I cannot undertake to affirm. Proudhon utterly disbelieves these pictures. There is not corn enough on the cart, he says, for a real harvest, nor any genuine rustic life in these peasants of a painter's dreamland. Very possibly Proudhon is right. Léopold Robert may have pursued an ideal, which, so far as actual rustic life is concerned, must be pronounced false in its superlative refinement. Yet though his gift may have been injudiciously employed, it was a great gift and a rare one, and art can achieve no perfect work without it.

Proudhon considers Horace Vernet as irrational as Ingres and Delacroix: "*Sottise et impuissance, je n'ai pas d'autres*

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termes pour caractériser de pareils ouvrages." Such is the verdict on Vernet's works in general. Descending to particulars, we have a lively expression of dislike. Speaking of that prodigious canvas *La Smala*, our critic uses the following highly energetic language: "Otez-moi cette peinture: pour le vulgaire qui l'admire, elle est d'un détestable exemple; pour les honnêtes gens qui savent à quel sentiment elle répond, elle est un sujet de remords. L'auteur a été payé, je suppose; je demande que cette toile soit enlevée, ratissée, dégraissée, puis vendue comme filasse au chiffonnier."

I agree with Proudhon so far as this, that Vernet's work has no intellectual or moral value, and that it is not even in any high sense artistic. Nevertheless, he was a great representative man, and, in his own peculiar way, one of the most marvellously endowed men who ever lived. He painted French soldiers so exactly as French soldiers understand themselves that his works are, as it were, collective works; it is as if the whole French army had taken up paint-brushes, and, suddenly gifted with pictorial skill, wrought together unanimously. His pictures ought to be preserved as a thoroughly faithful record of the common French military mind of this age. The French soldier has a peculiar professional character, and, when it is not natural to him as a man, he rapidly acquires it by contact. Vernet loved that character; and as he painted what he loved, he did it with a fidelity which, whatever critics may say, was by no means superficial. Gay, brave, thoughtless, poor, cheerful under privation, happy with a little luxury or honour,—merry and kind habitually, yet stern and savage on occasion,—of almost childish simplicity, yet with a tiger-like spring and fury in attack,—these little madder-breeched heroes were beloved by Vernet sympathetically. He took the utmost interest in them all, knew everything about their existence, could remember every item of their uniforms as a mother remembers the little frocks of her own children. Proudhon has a profound contempt for this interest in externals; but what is a soldier without his uniform and his arms? And Vernet could remember faces too, and paint every soldier from memory whom he had once looked at attentively. Proudhon is angry at Vernet's honest taste for military life in its less elevating aspects; but what is more wearisome than perpetual heroics?

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Proudhon finds it convenient to admit the degradation of modern art in order to herald the great reform which in his opinion is to renew and re-invigorate it. This reform is the substitution of justice and truth for æsthetic quality as the aim of the artist. We are familiar with this principle already in England in another form. Mr. Ruskin has often told us that art ought to place truth first and beauty second. Proudhon goes a step farther, and says that in the human mind there is but a duality, or rather polarity, Conscience and Science, or, in other words, Justice and Truth; the faculty which perceives beauty he excludes, or wholly subordinates. Certainly there is much great art which is devoid of beauty, as for instance Dürer's; and there is much small art which has beauty, or at least that lower form of it which we call prettiness: yet the best art is both true and beautiful. Proudhon so strongly detests the principle of art for art, that what he most undervalues in works of art is precisely their artistic quality. Like many men of narrow culture who have got hold of a great truth, he has been dragged out of his depth by it. It seems to me that the right theory on this subject has never been precisely stated even by Ruskin, and still less by Proudhon. The relation of truth to æsthetic quality in painting is one of inferior rank, but prior necessity. This complex sort of relation occurs in many other things. In building, for instance, the work of the mason is of inferior rank to the work of the architect, yet of prior necessity. In literature, grammatical accuracy of language is of inferior rank to the poetical gift, yet of prior necessity. In music, truth of intonation is of inferior rank to musical feeling, yet of prior necessity. So that, in my view, truth is to be put *before* beauty as the first thing to be asked for, yet not *above* beauty as if it were the higher thing.[1]

[1] Proudhon never attempts to estimate the value of thought and imagination in art, and they can scarcely be brought under his duality. I should say that, in art, natural truth is lower than artistic invention, and yet more necessary; whilst artistic invention is lower than thought, and yet, for pictorial purposes, more necessary. In art, as in life, necessity and rank are often in inverse proportion, and what is most necessary is first asked for. The food of the body is the first want, the food of the mind the second. The material qualities of art are its first necessity; the spiritua come after.

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All these theories and reasonings of Proudhon, of which I have endeavoured to give an accurate account, are introductory to the main object of his work, which is the elevation of Courbet to the rank of a great *rational* artist, the reformer and regenerator of art.—1866.

NOTE.

A writer in the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review* (Mr. Franklin Leifchild) found fault with this paper on account of its "apologetic tone,"—"the low estimate of art in comparison with a more positive kind of power, and the mistrust of its native and intrinsic dignity." Mr. Leifchild forgot that I was writing with reference to Proudhon and his point of view, which has a constant tendency to draw us out of the purely artistic region into a region of moral and utilitarian speculation.

It can scarcely be necessary to assure the reader of this volume, who holds in his hand the main results of my thinking about art for the last twenty years, that my estimate of art is not a low estimate, and that I certainly do not mistrust its native and intrinsic dignity. It seems clear that art has no influence, or that it has remarkably little influence, over the great majority even of modern Europeans, for most of them are simply indifferent to what is essentially artistic in the Fine Arts, and the dignity of art is dignity of a kind certainly not appreciable by them; but I earnestly beg Mr. Leifchild and every other reader to believe that there is not in my own mind the least infirmity of doubt as to the existence of both power and dignity in all Fine Art that is worthy of the name, though few may be so constituted or educated as to perceive them. The power of art, as he rightly argued, is of a very high kind, of the only kind that can move the free; yet it cannot move *all* the free, nor even many amongst the free. There is a weakness in its strength, in comparison with political force, which resides in its entire incapacity for compelling the respect or obedience of the unwilling; yet we do not love it or respect it less because we frankly recognize and admit this weakness. The plain truth is that art is absolutely not perceived

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at all by the immense majority of mankind; they see its works as material objects, as a horse sees the placards on the walls, whilst the art is imperceptible by them. As for the dignity of art, it exists most frequently as the inward dignity of Tasso when he came in his poverty to Turin, and the people saw his rags but could not see his genius. I have no mistrust of the power and dignity of art as qualities which certainly belong to it; I have not the slightest confidence in their effect upon the people in the street. Art is one of the spiritual powers, and the most delicate of them all; it moves a few, but only a few, and no one can tell who these may be, or where they may be found. Let the artist respect himself, and respect his noble occupation; yet it ought to be permitted to us to see the world simply as it is, and to confess the peculiar uncertainty of the influence which art may have upon mankind. We do not esteem it the less for perceiving this outward uncertainty; but every year's experience confirms me more and more in the conviction that no one can possibly predict the effect of a work of art, however excellent, on the mind of a man unknown to him, whilst even with reference to the minds we know most intimately we are liable to the strangest surprises. There is a chemistry in men's minds by which each of them eternally resists certain influences, and is acted on powerfully by other influences, as a metal by its mordant. When they find their own mordant they say that it is powerful, but they laugh at the weakness of the others, though it is only weakness relatively to themselves.—1873.

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XIX.

TWO ART PHILOSOPHERS.[1]

THE illusions of perspective exist in the intellectual, as they do in the material world. As the true relations of solar systems cannot be learned or understood without the help of science, so the relations of intellectual systems are not to be comprehended without the aid of philosophy. And as, on the one hand, it is not necessary to the fo cible and effectual life of a man of action that he should accurately conceive of the rank of his own planet amongst the heavenly bodies, so, on the other, it is not necessary to the success of certain special forms of intellectual activity that the labourer should justly estimate the importance of his own little intellectual world, or precisely ascertain its place in the universe of mind.

This is especially true of artists. An artist is a man who by long labour has trained himself to be able to express one version of one artistic idea,[2]—his personal conception of the idea dominant for the time in his own country. If there is a struggle for supremacy between two or more artistic ideas, the artist believes in one, and gives his life to realize his private conception of it, usually looking upon the others with antagonism or contempt. As a matter of curiosity, it is always

[1] "Philosophie de l'Art." Par H. Taine: Leçons Professées à l'École des Beaux Arts. Paris: Baillière.—"Le Spiritualisme dans l'Art." Par Charles Lévêque, Professeur de Philosophie au Collége de France. Paris: Baillière.

[2] Of course I use the words "artistic idea" in a special sense. I should be very sorry to seem to imply that artists had not as many ideas as other people, in the current acceptation of the word. What I mean is the vision of desired perfection, which for every artist is necessarily one.

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interesting to know what artists think of each other; but their opinions about art are valuable only as to special matters of fact, which their study of nature has enabled them to ascertain, or as indications of the existence of attractions and repulsions of which even the most acute thinkers might never suspect the existence. It is of course possible for an artist to raise himself from time to time out of the little plot of ground which he himself cultivates, and, like a man in the car of a balloon looking down on his own garden, see its true size and position; and it is also just possible for an artist so given to intellectual aërostation to return after each excursion in the upper regions, and cultivate his own acre in humble and laborious contentment, knowing well its littleness, and all the defects of its situation, yet loving it enough to be happy in it. This may be done, and in two or three instances it has been done; but its extreme rarity almost, though not quite, justifies the general belief that there is something essentially incompatible between the practical and speculative intellects. One might more profitably listen to a discourse about art by such a layman as Taine than to one by such an artist as was Léopold Robert. He was very justly famous as a practical artist, yet Gustave Planche said of his written observations on art, "His commonplace style, which I find fault with, comes from the commonplace of his thoughts themselves. What he says about the masters of his art is so obvious that to have said it there was no necessity to be the painter of the 'Moissonneurs.' Any *bourgeois* who had walked about in picture galleries would say as much, and say it as well. In reading these letters of Robert, one remains convinced that the practice of art, and the understanding of the general ideas which govern all the forms of invention, are two perfectly distinct things. The understanding of these ideas does not lead to the practice of painting or sculpture, architecture or music; but it may happen to eminent artists, and L. Robert's correspondence is there to prove it, to enunciate about these arts thoughts so very commonplace, so very useless, so very inapplicable, so utterly worn, so perfectly empty, that they make the most indulgent reader smile."

These considerations may prepare us to understand the position of M. Taine. He is not an artist, nor even an art critic, but an art philosopher. This distinction between art

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critics and art philosophers is, I am aware, a new one, and I may be allowed the space of a paragraph for its clearer definition.

An art critic, having continually to judge of small points of practical success or failure in the overcoming of particular difficulties, must necessarily be himself minutely acquainted with the practical details of art. Persons like Proudhon, who set up as art critics without this special knowledge, on the ground that, since they judge only results, processes do not concern them, are always incapable of true criticism, because they know nothing of the real struggles and aims of artists, and so may praise them for their simplest successes, and remain indifferent to their most arduous achievements. On the other hand (as we have just seen) the practical artist (who is nothing more) may fail as a critic, on account of the very concentration and limitation of his view. His own object is seen by him in proportions so exaggerated, that other aims, not less great and worthy in themselves, are hidden and dwarfed by it. Thus Ingres says that drawing is the whole of art, and that colour may be mastered in one week; after which, what is the value of his opinion about colourists? The true critic sees qualities in more accurate proportions than M. Ingres; nor could any critic tell us that the eye might be educated to colour in eight days without forfeiting for ever all claim to be listened to. So that on the one hand the critic is not to be ignorant of technicalities like Proudhon, nor absorbed in one technical aim like Ingres; but he ought to combine a thorough knowledge of practical matters with a theoretic largeness of view. When this theoretic largeness becomes the main characteristic of the writer, when he sees art habitually in vast systems and groupings occupying in their aggregate the whole field of art history, there is always a probability that the critic will lose himself in the philosopher, and that the utmost which he will be able to say safely about any particular work of art will be to fix its place in the artistic development of humanity.

Yet philosophy of this broad kind, if it be sound, has a definite function and use. It is the only force capable of repressing the narrow self-assertion of artistic sects. The devotee of some special idea is always so possessed by the idea, that he cannot see it in its relation to other ideas. What bigoted "classic" or ardent "romantic" ever sanely appre-

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ciated the services of both classicism and romanticism? To go to partisans in art for sound views of the whole subject is like going to a Red Republican, or a believer in the divine right of kings, for a rational political philosophy. For as the wise politician is a supporter of constitutional monarchy in England, a friend of imperialism in Russia, and of republicanism in Switzerland, because of these three forms of government each is the best in its own time and place, so an intelligent student of art may dispassionately approve of its various developments, and thank God that he has been born late enough to study at once the severe ideality of the Greek, the grotesque imagination of the Goth, the science and taste of the Renaissance artists, and the earnest naturalism of the moderns.

And now at last this wider philosophy has found an official advocate. In the very centre and head-quarters of academic tradition, the École des Beaux Arts, a professor has told the students, what no painter would be likely to tell them, that art is a natural product of humanity, as vegetation is the product of the soil; and that its varieties are the inevitable result of the changing states and circumstances of mankind, just as one place and climate has one flora and another another. Nor does he hesitate to give expression to the inference that the only duty of each country and generation is to produce freely its own flowers. How wide the interval from the old academic tradition to this tolerant and liberal doctrine! How pleasant to hear that what is best for us to do is that which is most our own, and to be released for ever from all obligation to reproduce an art which was the expression of a life we have not lived! We, who have been preached to about the duty of imitating the Greeks till some of us had come to that point of weariness that we hated the very name of Hellas, may congratulate ourselves that an authorized teacher has advanced a theory by which it may be permitted to us to love Greek art heartily, and yet not waste our whole lives in the vain endeavour to make our own work a repetition of it.

M. Taine's theory is not very profound because it is so obviously true, but the truisms of thinkers are very daring speculations in the temples of tradition; and M. Taine deserves honour, not so much for what he has thought, as for having ventured to give utterance to his thought in a place where its distinct expression marked a new era in official art

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teaching. Even if M. Taine were to be succeeded by some retrograde professor, the students who heard him are not likely to forget his lesson, and the conclusions to which it leads. If it is true, as this new teacher says, that the artist is the product of his time, it is evident (they will infer) that no modern artist can by effort become like the product of another time. If we are orange-trees, we shall produce oranges; if fig-trees, we may blamelessly produce figs. If we are in too chilly a climate, our fruit will never ripen, so (as artists) we shall be unproductive; and the climate, for every artist, is the collective life and intellect of his own time. Those who produce in it are not necessarily the best, but those whom the climate best suits. The average amount of natural artistic endowment is much the same in all ages; but one epoch favours the best, and another that which is not quite the best, and so downwards till some epochs favour no art at all. This seems to be M. Taine's view; but here it may be objected that the permanent characteristics of races, as well as the temporary characteristics of epochs, may have much to do with the matter; and that the average percentage of natural art intellects in the French race is possibly greater than amongst the Tartars or Esquimaux. This consideration, however, in nowise diminishes the natural effect of M. Taine's view of art on practical work and on criticism. If he is in the main right, as I believe him to be, it is useless for us as artists to try to do work of any kind whatever but our own; and it is childish in us, as critics, to find fault with schools of art because they differ from our own ideal and from each other. Our business, as art philosophers, is not to find fault, but to note characteristics; and it is as idle in us to set up some kind of art as perfection, blaming all other in proportion as it deviates from that standard, as it would be in a botanist to set up the vine-leaf as the correct thing in leaf beauty, and condemn the willow as heretical for its obstinate non-conformity to his pet pattern.

M. Taine thus defines his art philosophy:—

"Ours is modern, and differs from the old in being historic, and not dogmatic; that is to say, it does not impose precepts, but ascertains and proclaims[1] laws. The old æsthetics gave first a definition of the beautiful, and said, for example, that the beautiful is the expression of the moral

[1] I use these two words to get the double force of *constater* employed in the original.

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ideal, or else that it is the expression of the invisible, or, again, that it is the expression of human passions; then starting thence as from a legal decision, absolved, condemned, admonished, and guided. I am very happy not to have so heavy a task to perform; I have not to guide you—I should be too much embarrassed. My only duty is to exhibit facts, and to show you how these facts were produced. The modern method, which I endeavour to follow, and which is beginning to introduce itself into all the modern sciences, consists in regarding human labours and, in particular, works of art as facts and products whose characteristics are to be noted and whose causes are to be investigated—no more. So understood, Science neither proscribes nor pardons; she states and explains. She does not say to you, 'Despise Dutch art, it is too coarse, and enjoy none but Italian.' Neither does she say to you, 'Despise Gothic art; it lacks health; enjoy none but the Greek.' She leaves to every one the liberty to follow his private preferences, to love best that which is in conformity with his own temperament, and to study, with a more attentive care, that which best corresponds to the development of his own mind. As for Science herself, she has sympathy for all forms of art and for all schools, even for those which seem most opposed; she accepts them as so many manifestations of the human mind; she considers that the more numerous and contrary they are, the more they show the mind of humanity under new and numerous aspects; she acts like Botany, which studies with equal interest, now the orange-tree and the laurel, now the fir and the birch; she is herself a sort of Botany, applied not to plants, but to the labours of men. In this character she follows the general movement which draws together in our day the moral and the natural sciences, and which, giving to the former the principles, the precautions, the directions of the latter, communicates to them the same solidity and assures to them the same progress."

If M. Taine is an historical positivist in art,—that is, a philosopher who considers all the varieties of art as equally subjects for investigation from the scientific standpoint, whether we regard them as representations of nature or as manifestations of mind,—M. Lévêque is a being of another order, a passionate spiritualist, with a capacity for quite religious fervour in behalf of the doctrines in which, as he believes, are bound up the fate of the Fine Arts and the moral health of all humanity.

Spiritualism, as M. Lévêque uses the word, means the habitual reference to the ideal; materialism, the forgetfulness of ideal excellence in the absorbing study of material things. The great difficulty of spiritualism is to distinguish between noble ideals and those baser creations of the imaginative faculty which, so far from being higher than material nature, fall short of it or degrade it. It is the business of philosophy, says M. Lévêque, to establish this distinction.

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"No one now doubts the power of those concealed movers which at one time push societies onward, and at another pull them violently back, and which are called ideas. It has been given to society to choose between the good and the bad movers. The bad are the ideas in which error predominates; the good, those where predominates truth. To recognize, unravel, clear up, fortify, develop, the true element; to distinguish, lay bare, point out, weaken, the false element in ideas—such is the office of philosophy; and the older a society is, the more men's minds in it are ripe and disposed for criticism and discussion, the more imperious does this duty of philosophy become."

M. Lévêque goes on to argue that philosophy divides itself naturally into specialities, and that there are as many philosophies as there are sciences. Thus there is a philosophy of history, a philosophy of medicine, a philosophy of political economy; and all these terms take their place in modern language as the ideas which they express become clearer and more definite. It follows that philosophy is under the necessity of continual expansion and subdivision to correspond with the extent of modern acquisition and its minute ramification in specialities. There is a philosophy of the beautiful, just as there is a philosophy of the true.

When we get hold of a book like this, with a subject so peculiarly tempting to the dealer in vague and pompous generalities, our best course is, first, to read it through with patient attention, and then try to find out what new deposit the book has left in us. The great difficulty of the spiritualist philosophy has always been that, although it rightly insisted on the necessity for an idea, it was embarrassed when we inquired of it some direction and guidance in our own search after the ideal. Hence spiritualism, in its practical issues, is rather a retrospective than an encouraging philosophy; it names certain artists of the past as its saints and heroes, but has a tendency to restrain present productiveness within the limits of traditionary repetition. What it most dreads is materialism, or the objective study of matter; therefore it has to insist on an intellectual ideal; and as it is of no use to talk about such ideals as are not yet embodied, nor (so far as we can know) even conceived, spiritualism is always compelled to recur to ideals which have already been made visible to us in marble or on canvas, its favourite examples being Greek sculpture and the designs of Raphael, to which a Frenchman is likely to add the paintings of Nicolas Poussin. By dint of

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incessant repetition of this reference, spiritualism has educated whole generations of artists in the belief that by looking at these works, and copying them, and imitating them, they might themselves reach this wonderful and mysterious goal, the idea which so fascinated from afar the eyes of the devout philosophers. Those who, in their own way, sought new ideals in nature, were condemned as materialists, or mere copiers of matter. The misfortune of the spiritualists, as the directors of practical effort, was, that they were always living up in the clouds, and talking about *qualities* as severed from *things*, seeking the good, the beautiful, the true, conceived as metaphysical notions, which was a hopeless search for visible adjectives. You might just as profitably set out in search of speed as an entity.

To escape this imputation of cloudiness, M. Lévêque tells us that the spiritualist philosophy is now observant, and has travelled over land and sea, which turns out to mean that M. Cousin undertook a voyage across the Channel to study the Poussins in England. It was a pity to lower the sublime generality of the phrase by this adduced proof. Spiritualism voyaging over land and sea was rather a grand and imposing idea. M. Cousin taking a through ticket to London by Calais, or, if economically disposed, by Boulogne, or, if parsimoniously, by Dieppe, makes somehow a weaker impression on the imagination, and carries one to prosaic associations of little rolling steamboats, and that terrible temporary ailment which subjugates so many voyagers, spiritualist or materialist. Still M. Cousin deserves hearty praise for having been willing to use his corporeal eyes instead of evolving art criticism out of his moral consciousness. There are two duties of the writer on art,—to look and to think; but philosophers are too apt to consider the first a work of supererogation, whilst they perform the second with infinite patience and diligence.

Our difficulty with spiritualism is to get at the meaning of its great abstraction—"the Beautiful." M. Lévêque fixes this for us in a theistic conception. Pantheism could not conceive of it, but Theism can, because Theism has conceived God, who is the Beautiful, and whom, without understanding, we conceive. "We have then, in the innermost depths of our reason, an absolute type of grandeur, not of physical grandeur, but of intellectual and moral grandeur; that is to say, of perfection.

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Since the Infinite Beauty is conceived, a measure is given us for imperfect and finite beauties."

Reasoning of this sort is convenient sometimes with children, because it overawes them, and prevents them from asking questions; but it is unsatisfactory to men who are out of the childish stage of intellectual development. "The Infinite Beauty is conceived;" Humanity has conceived Divinity, and so has a fixed standard by which to measure finite perfections. Could anything be more various, more fluctuating, more emphatically *un*fixed, than men's conceptions of the Supreme Being? Our conception of Him varies from year to year with our varying knowledge and intellectual force. This is quite inevitable; it would be inevitable still if He lived familiarly amongst us as an earthly Sovereign. We could never form a true conception of Him so long as we remained inferior to Himself. Before fancying that we can conceive of God, it would be well to reflect whether we can even conceive of mere human intellect in its highest examples. The superior may be admired, or even adored, by the inferior, but he cannot be conceived by him. The English conception of God is not the French conception; it is certainly not the Scotch; and if we may judge by the pious allusions of Transatlantic politicians, it is most assuredly not the American. Nor does the highest contemporary English conception very closely resemble that held by minds of the same relative rank in the same country thirty years ago. Setting aside atheists and young children, it is likely that there exist in England just now at least fifteen million different conceptions *of the English conception* of the Deity. How then are we to refer to the Idea of Deity as a fixed visible standard of Beauty? And even if we could suppose this possible as to intellectual and moral perfection, how are we to apply this standard to physical perfection? How reason from the Beauty of Goodness to the beauty of a statue or a picture? It is this awkward necessity for shifting the argument from morals to matter that demonstrates the weakness of dogmatic spiritualism.[1] These philosophers first tell us

[1] Imagine, for example, the absurdity of meditating upon the beauty of sacrifice in order to be able to judge of the comparative beauty of silks. The jurors at the International Exhibition would have failed to perceive the connection between the two, and the manufacturers at Lyons are probably not aware of it.

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that they have hit upon the immutable, eternal Beauty, which is moral Beauty; and then they come with that to a piece of carved marble, or painted canvas, and try to apply their immutable standard. It would be as reasonable to devise a converse criticism, and try to measure the accuracy of history with a two-foot rule.

The spiritualist would find no words severe enough to express his contempt for a philosophy of art which professed to have no fixed standard of Beauty, and I dare say that if I were to develop my own theory of æsthetics I should be called by hard names. What I say is, that spiritualism does not erect fixed standards at all; it only erects *words*, the signification of which fluctuates every day. It is amazing how easily men are governed and imposed upon by words, and the less they understand them the more readily they submit to them. To say, "The Beautiful is the standard of beauty," is a childish play upon words, because the beautiful is an abstraction having no visible existence.

At this point a spiritualist would probably accuse me of denying the existence of beauty altogether. Well, except as an adjective, an attribute, I do. It is a quality, not a being. Just so I would deny the separate existence of cleanliness or holiness. There are clean people and holy people, and clean places and holy places; but you cannot detach the adjective, and set it up as an immutable standard of cleanliness or holiness. Of course we need some kind of standard, and we derive it from some visible example; but if a higher example were shown us, we should quit our old standard, and take to the new one. For instance: our farmers have lately been told to be clean, in order to diminish the ravages of the cattle plague; but as the word "cleanliness" would to them only signify English cleanliness, a higher example was appealed to; not an abstraction "the clean," as these philosophers say "the beautiful," but "Dutch cleanliness," as an art critic might counsel our artists to aim at a Dutch carefulness in execution.

I have no space to criticise M. Lévêque's work in detail, though I have read it with care. The central idea of it is that which I have just set before the reader. Though this central idea is certainly an illusion, spiritualism has rendered us the service of insisting upon the necessity for ideality in

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art. If there is no immutable standard of "the beautiful," there may still be an endless endeavour after that beauty which for each of us seems the best. M. Lévêque is especially right in desiring that artists should be penetrated with the faith that their art ought to have lofty intellectual, or psychological aims, and that it can only have enduring value in so far as it is a product of *mind*. With all my heart I agree with M. Lévêque in assigning to those forms of art which are the mere copyism of matter a much lower rank than is due to the art which conveys great messages from the soul of the artist to humanity. It is probable, however, that as to *what* particular art fell under each category there might be some difference of opinion between us.—1866.

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XX.

LESLIE.

GREAT men leave two different impressions of themselves on their contemporaries, the one the result of their public career, the other of their private life. When these are harmonious; when both what is known to the public as such, and what reaches the public through the report of a great man's intimates, alike are favourable, the personage becomes the object of traditional admiration. It gives a solid satisfaction to the conscience of mankind to be confirmed in its natural tendency to believe in the worthiness of its favourites. It greatly augments the chances of immortality for a genius when those who knew him in the common intercourse of life certify that he was as noble as his performance. It damages the fame of those who most excel in their own craft when it is known that outside of it they were no better than other people; and nothing diminishes the prestige of a refined artist like evidence that his refinement was limited to his trade, and did not make his manners beautiful nor his conduct wise.

Charles Robert Leslie, the painter, is a distinguished instance of an artist whose private estimation amongst those who enjoyed his intimacy was as high as the estimation of him formed by the outer world, that only knew him by his works. I had the advantage of observing him in both capacities—as man and artist. I have never neglected an opportunity for studying his pictures; and he was good enough to admit me to as great a degree of personal intimacy as the wide difference in our years would naturally allow.

It may be considered one of the misfortunes of a writer

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on art that he cannot place himself on terms of friendship with famous artists without renouncing all intention of writing about them. The *nil nisi bonum*, a rule questionable enough as regards dead men from whom we have received no kindness, will always remain in force concerning men, whether living or dead, who have proved themselves true friends to us. On this account I should have abstained from writing on Leslie altogether if it had seemed necessary to weaken or withhold any criticism out of consideration for his kindness and hospitality. For it is the duty of a public writer to withhold no criticism, however severe, which he believes to be just; but it is the duty of a private friend to pass in silence what appear to him weaknesses or imperfections in his friend. If these two duties conflict, the subject is a forbidden one. In this case they do *not* conflict. I may speak of Leslie at the same time with the frankness of a critic and the tenderness of a friend. Nothing that I should desire to say of him could hurt him if he were alive to hear it.

It is the basis of a large and liberal criticism, the basis even of all justice in criticism, to tolerate and applaud the most opposite kinds of faculty, and even, what the ordinary moralist so unwillingly admits, very wide diversities in character. Leslie realized, or closely approached, a very beautiful ideal of life and character, and one especially advantageous in this respect, that it was most eminently favourable to his own happiness, and to that of everybody over whom he had any influence; but even his good qualities produced, as they always do, an appearance of deficiency in other directions. That wise French proverb, "*On a toujours les défauts de ses qualités*," tersely expresses this inevitable necessity. If we have a quality we have a defect with it, not necessarily a blameworthy fault or failing, but a deficiency. We have each of us these deficiencies; nor are they, in general, faults to be ashamed of. They may therefore be mentioned without offence, just as we may say of the genus *homo*, that it is wingless, seeing that being endowed with arms it could not (according to the present arrangements of Nature on this planet) have had wings also.

A general impression exists here, and I believe in the United States, that Leslie was an American by birth. He was born in London, of American parents, on the 19th of October, 1794. On the 18th of September, 1799, his father, Mr. Robert

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Leslie, took his family to America, on board the ship *Washington*. The voyage was long and difficult; the ship encountered tempestuous weather in the Channel, and was thirty-four days in beating out. As she passed through our English fleet, a signal gun was fired from the *Majestic*, which, by carelessness, had a ball in it, that lodged in a spar on the *Washington*, and very nearly killed two passengers. The day after, the *Washington* met with a French privateer, and had two hard fights, during which the little Leslies were kept down in the hold with other children, where they amused themselves by playing at hide-and-seek. Shortly afterwards they met another privateer, which, however, avoided them after receiving one shot. Then they put in at Lisbon for repairs, which detained them there five months and two days. On leaving Lisbon, they encountered a gale of wind, and lost their fore-topmast. On the sudden cessation of the gale, the waves not having yet had time to subside, and the ship being no longer prevented from rolling by the pressure of the wind on her canvas, did so with such violence that her main-topmast went also. She arrived at Philadelphia on the 11th of May, nearly eight months after her departure from London. Mr. Robert Leslie, during his previous residence in America, had been a watchmaker in Philadelphia, where he had a partner, whom he had left in charge of the business during his absence. This person appears to have mismanaged the affairs of the firm, and, as he was now dead, the surviving partner brought an action against his executors, but himself died before the suit was decided.

Leslie's mother was now a widow in very narrow circumstances. She opened a boarding-house, and her eldest daughter taught drawing; but Leslie and his brother continued their education at the University of Pennyslvania, by the kindness of two of the Professors.

Leslie tells us that he neglected mathematics as much as he possibly could. He had from infancy liked drawing, and now desired to be a painter. His mother, however, could not afford him a painter's education, and he was bound apprentice to Messrs. Bradford and Inskeep, booksellers, in Philadelphia. The circumstance which changed Leslie's destiny was the arrival of G. F. Cooke, the actor, whose likeness he drew from memory with so much success, that Mr. Bradford believed he might succeed as a painter, and now encouraged his attempts at

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drawing, which he had before discountenanced. This sketch of Cooke was taken to the Exchange Coffee House, at the hour when the merchants of Philadelphia assembled there, and made a sensation amongst them. Mr. Bradford, with a kindness which deserves warm praise, and which caused Leslie to remember him always with the most lively gratitude, struck whilst the iron was hot, and got up a subscription (to which he contributed liberally) that enabled Leslie to study painting for two years in Europe.

Leslie's first lesson in painting was received at Philadelphia from Mr. Sully, a resident artist. "He began," says Leslie, "a copy of a picture in my presence, and then put his palette and brushes into my hand, telling me to proceed in the same way with a copy of my own. The next day he carried his work further, and I again followed him, and so on, until the copies were both finished; thus explaining to me at once the processes of scumbling, glazing, &c." This is the best practical way of teaching the mechanism of the art. I have elsewhere advocated its adoption in the studios of eminent artists, where several pupils might be allowed to copy, in this way, works as they advance, process by process, without any cost of time or trouble on the part of the master, beyond an occasional word of counsel.

Sully gave his pupil letters to West, Beechey, and other artists in London. Leslie sailed in company with Mr. Inskeep, one of the partners in the bookselling establishment he had just quitted, who had business in England. He found Americans in London who were kind to him, and formed a friendship with Morse, then a young art-student like himself, who shared the same painting-room. Their most intimate associates were young Americans from Boston, students of medicine; they had, however, the advantage of advice from Allston and King.

No reader of Leslie's autobiography can have felt surprised to learn that, when young, he was a devoted play-goer. His art, being an interpretation of that order of literature which exhibits men and women in dramatic action, was of itself most intimately allied with the profession of the actor. Actors study plays, and afterwards conceive and personate the characters; painters like Leslie study plays (or novels), and afterwards conceive and paint the characters; both study literature with a view to the reproduction, in visible shape

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and gesture, of the phantoms evoked by the imagination of the writer. The actor may learn from the painter, and the painter reciprocally from the actor. Much of Leslie's most valuable artistic education must have been acquired in theatres, and his pictures are permanent models of all those qualities of fine acting which appeal to the mind through the eye only.

Every young man of genius has at first a deep respect for acquired reputations. Leslie reverenced West and Fuseli in his youth. We have a remark in the autobiography which Leslie left us, on Fuseli's teaching at the Academy when he was a student there, which is not to be passed without notice. "He generally came into the room once in the course of every evening, and rarely without a book in his hand. He would take any vacant place among the students, and sit reading nearly the whole time he stayed with us. I believe he was right. For those students who are born with powers that will make them eminent, it is sufficient to place fine works of art before them. They do not want instruction, and those that do are not worth it. Art may be *learnt*, but can't be *taught*. Under Fuseli's wise neglect, Wilkie, Mulready, Etty, Landseer, and Haydon distinguished themselves, and were the better for not being made all alike by teaching, if, indeed, that could have been done."

This is one of the few subjects on which it is difficult to agree with Leslie. I am in favour of a thorough artistic education; believing that if all art cannot be taught, the handicraft of art can, and something besides, and that an educated artist need not necessarily be less original than an educated writer. English painters are for the most part untrained, or half-trained. This, more than any other cause, has delayed their recognition out of their own country. Men of great genius occasionally overcome this disadvantage; but even the best of them are weakened by it, or prevented from reaching that fine equality of faculty which severe training can alone secure. *All* lose time, many waste life itself for the lack of that. Painting is not merely mental conception, not merely poetry, but at the same time the most difficult of all the handicrafts. Carpentry and joinering, cabinet-making even, are only on the same level as house-painting in point of difficulty; landscape and figure-painting, *as handicraft trades*, are far more

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difficult than any one of these.[1] Yet you apprentice carpenters, and joiners, and cabinet-makers, in their youth; you apprentice even house-painters, but you think it natural to leave artists to pick up their craft by simply looking at what other men have done in it. All that can be said of *no* teaching is, that it is preferable to a tyrannous system of bad teaching. Nor is it inevitable that artists should be "made all alike by teaching." If every artist admitted pupils into his own studio, or into a studio close to that in which he himself worked, and applied to their education principles arrived at by himself in the course of his own experience, the variety of experience in the masters would insure a variety of training in the pupils; and each youth, on beginning to learn his profession, might get himself apprenticed to that particular master for whom he felt the closest natural affinity. There is great difference of opinion amongst English artists on the subject of education in their profession. Many share Leslie's view; others advocate a uniform and public system; and the rest think private apprenticeship would answer best, only they do not take apprentices.

Leslie obtained two silver medals at the Academy. His first large picture had for its subject "Saul and the Witch of Endor." West assisted him in the composition, often calling to see the work in progress. This picture was refused at the British Gallery, but West kindly hung it in a large room of his own, where it found a purchaser in Sir John Leicester, afterwards Lord de Tabley.

In the autumn of 1817, Leslie visited Paris in company with Allston and William Collins, and the three made studies in the Louvre. Of the French painters then in vogue Leslie tells us that he liked Guérin best, but that he did not like David.

Two years afterwards, in 1819, Leslie exhibited the first of those pictures which have won his fame, "Sir Roger de Coverley going to Church;" in 1821, when he was elected an Associate of the Academy, "May Day in the time of Queen Elizabeth;" in 1824, "Sancho Panza in the apartment of the Duchess;" in 1825, the year of his marriage, "Slender,

[1] It appears from a recent speech of Mr. Odger's, that a shoemaker cannot learn to stitch properly in less than seven years. How easily we all overlook the difficulties of the handicrafts! Amateurs always, and artists too frequently, overlook them in the fine arts.—1873.

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Shallow, and Anne Page." In 1826 he was elected a member of the Royal Academy.

Leslie having now found his vein, made a bright beginning of reputation, obtained an Academic diploma, and formed many friendships in England. London was exactly the place for him, but his American relations plotted and contrived a plan to induce him to recross the Atlantic by accepting for him the appointment of Drawing Master at the West Point Military Academy. One can hardly blame them for this, as affection is often quite unconsciously selfish, and no doubt they thought a fixed income a good thing for a married man; but Leslie was already too distinguished a painter to waste his time in teaching drawing to schoolboys. On arriving at West Point, and making the experiment of uniting the professions of painter and drawing-master, Leslie found that the time required by his new occupation was much greater than had been represented to him, whilst the advantages of a permanent residence in America seemed, on the whole, doubtful. He therefore returned to England with his family after a few months at West Point. His subsequent history consists of little else than quiet labour, steady and successful, but by no means severe; constant intercourse with many friends, of whom not a few are famous for their own achievements; the publication of a biography and a book of lectures, and then the gradual decline of health, hastened finally by the loss of a very dear daughter.

My personal recollections of Leslie are limited to the last few years of his life. Looking back to the time, now many years ago, when I enjoyed the most of his society, I regret very much not to have profited by it better. A distinguished artist, an Academician, who was an old friend of Leslie's, used to urge me to place my studies more under Leslie's direction; and, indeed, nothing would have been easier for me than to have become his pupil, as my lodgings were near to his house, and he would have come to see my work almost daily if I had desired it. But that unhappy fatality which so often prevents men from seeing their true interest till too late interposed between us. I had the greatest respect for Leslie's *own* art, but felt convinced that he knew little of landscape, and, not wishing to hurt him by neglecting to follow any recommendations he might offer, I carefully kept my work out of his way, which

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was the easier as I painted in a studio several miles from my lodgings. There was, perhaps, no great error in this estimate. Leslie was not a good landscape-painter, and his knowledge of the natural phenomena of landscape, his acquaintance with that science of natural appearances which is the basis of the art of landscape-painting, was limited to the commonly-known facts. My error lay in another direction. I failed to perceive that, however slight might be Leslie's acquaintance with these specialities of my art, he was in full possession of the kind of technical knowledge which I most needed—the safe and effectual management of oil colour.[1] No artist that ever lived painted more soundly and safely, no artist ever got more satisfactory results by means so simply right. Reynolds and Turner were both better colourists, but neither of them would have *taught painting* so well as Leslie. He was always ready to do anything he could to serve me. I remember how he took me to see Turner's Gallery in Queen Anne Street whilst the Chancery suit was pending; how he took me to see Rogers and his house, and the studies left in possession of Constable's family, when we spent hours over them together; how he asked me to meet celebrated friends of his; how willingly and kindly he showed me everything of his own which he thought might be interesting. He heard me say that I should like to see Landseer, or inferred as much from some expression of admiration for Landseer's work, and so asked me to meet him; and, when everybody else was gone away, kept me till the last that I might hear some of Sir Edwin's best talk. I happened to express some curiosity about Leslie's venerable friend Mr. Rogers, so he took me to St. James's Place. Mr. Rogers was out for his day's drive, but Leslie went in and spent an hour or two in showing me everything of artistic interest in the house; we penetrated even into the poet's own bedroom. At last Mr. Rogers returned, and Leslie introduced me to him with one of those kind expressions which never failed him when they could be of use. Mr. Rogers thought he remembered having seen me before, and, when told that he was mistaken, said that I could not have been better

[1] Besides this, although Leslie may not have been a good landscape-painter himself, he had a keen appreciation of certain fine qualities in thoroughly mature and accomplished landscape art which a young man is hardly ever able to estimate at their true value.—1873.

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introduced, and asked me if I had been all over the house. Then he began to praise one or two works of Leslie's that he possessed, and we had a little talk about Velasquez and other subjects. At that date, however, Mr. Rogers, though he still loved art, had lost his memory. In Turner's house we saw the pictures now in the possession of the nation, and Leslie criticised them in his temperate style.

In conversation, Leslie belonged to the class of anecdotists. He very seldom argued, advanced opinions with apparent diffidence, and never, in my hearing at least, was roused into eagerness or eloquence. His manners were perfect, according to the English ideal; he never interrupted or contradicted, except in a very careful and delicate way. There was great charm in his society, and he had two very valuable qualities in the highest perfection—simplicity and urbanity. There is, however, an element of dissatisfaction in intercourse with such characters as his. They are never thrown off their guard, they never tell you rude truth; if a fact is not likely to be agreeable to you, they pass it in silence, and so; if they are wise, their wisdom does not much benefit you. Leslie would not frankly tell a young artist what he thought of his work, if the full expression of his opinion might possibly hurt him. This was not craft or disingenuousness in him; it arose from pure tenderness of heart. He could not endure to give pain.

I have said that he was an anecdotist. Perhaps it is as well that anecdotists should not predominate in society, for they contribute little to the sustained work of conversation, and are rather apt to disconnect it. But Leslie was the most favourable example of the class I ever met. His stories were always interesting and well told, and every one of them had for its point some curious illustration of character. He never wasted a word in superfluous narration, said all that was necessary to prepare you for the point he had in reserve, and then placed it effectually. His autobiography contains many anecdotes which are told exactly as he would have narrated them verbally. Take, for instance, this absurd one about Charles Lamb:—"I dined with him one day at Mr. Gilman's. Returning to town in the stage coach, which was filled with Mr. Gilman's guests, we stopped for a minute or two at Kentish Town. A woman asked the coachman, 'Are you

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full inside?' Upon which Lamb put his head through the window and said, 'I am quite full inside; that last piece of pudding at Mr. Gilman's did the business for me.'" Now, that is a perfectly-told anecdote. In a few brief sentences the reader is fully prepared to relish the saying which is to be quoted. You cannot retrench one syllable. The words "at Kentish Town" might, perhaps, have been omitted, but they add to the interest of the anecdote by giving it locality. Leslie told a story as he painted a face, giving all that the meaning exacted in a few felicitous touches. When he had hit an expression in painting, his countenance beamed with quiet satisfaction; when he had told a characteristic anecdote, his eyes lighted up with lively humour. This habit of anecdote bore a very close relation to his habit of looking for and seizing curious momentary expressions in people's faces. What delighted him most were those accidental revelations of character which other people commonly miss. He watched for those chance liftings of the curtain of conventionalism when a look or a word reveals some unsuspected peculiarity of mind. Subtle humorist as he was, he saw the weaknesses and absurdities of men only to smile at them with the kindliest interest. If ever he *laughed* at anybody, it was as we sometimes laugh at the little oddities of dear friends. Wrong and injustice would have made him indignant if he had dwelt upon them, but he instinctively avoided the contemplation of these. He loved the beauty of the world, fair landscapes, graceful women, pleasant society, and quiet merriment. He had no tragic power, and shut his eyes to the existence of evil, repeating to himself a maxim he had made, which is very pretty, and would be very pleasant if it were only true—"There is no evil but sin, from which I pray God to deliver us all now and hereafter." He did not see that the operation of the most salutary and necessary natural law causes much suffering which, to the sufferers, is decidedly an evil, and that a small imprudence in this world often brings on more misery than a great sin. He did not see that the one law which governs the world is practical convenience, that the universe is a machine intended to work well as a whole, and that innocence itself may be very cruelly lacerated, like a child in a cotton-mill if it happens to get between the wheels. The perception of this continual tragedy is the condition of the

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highest intellectual power; the courage to face this fact is the condition of solemnity in art and eloquence in literature. Not having this, Leslie could still paint refined comedy and write pleasant anecdotes or paragraphs of sensible counsel to his younger brethren. But he had not literary force. He wrote correctly and even elegantly, and always in perfectly good taste, but never passionately or persuasively. His prose is to the prose of born writers what the verse of an Oxford Prize Poem is to the verse of Sordello or Don Juan.

The "Life of Constable" was the first book Leslie made. His object was, by a selection of letters, to place the life and character of his subject as vividly as possible before the reader, effacing himself as biographer, and only coming forward from time to time when a few words of his own were needed to link together the materials he had collected. As a work of literary art, other than simply editorial, the claims of this biography are consequently slight. The publication of private letters is nearly always injudicious. Private letters, when they *are* private letters intended for no subsequent publicity, are careless, and full of little trivialities which do not easily support the glare of type. It is right that a biographer should have access to letters written by his subject which are not strictly confidential; but he ought to use them only for his own guidance, not deliver them directly to the public eye. The "Life of Constable" is not a work to be read through easily—the perpetual recurrence of little breaks in the narrative, the introduction of trivialities which tempt the reader to skip, and yet the attention required to follow all the movements and details of Constable's existence across the incessant quotations, are unfavourable to the reader's comfort. There is a passage by Leslie in which he vindicates his own judgment in printing a letter of Constable's containing expressions of exultation about the quality of one of his own pictures. If you grant that private letters are to be published at all, those which express self-satisfaction ought not to be omitted; the more, in this instance, as such self-satisfaction ought to be liberally forgiven to painters, who enjoy very little of it. I only find fault with Leslie so far as this—that he conformed to a bad custom. In the *way* he conformed to it he showed, of course, his usual good taste.

Leslie's admiration for Constable was extreme. The simple

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truth is, that although he may have admired, or thought it his duty to admire, one or two other artists more, no artist touched him so closely as Constable did. He himself says that Constable's pictures gave him a delight distinct from, and he almost thinks superior to, that he received from any other pictures whatever. "Amongst all the landscape-painters, ancient or modern," says Leslie, "no one carries me so entirely to nature."[1]

Mr. Ruskin refuses altogether the rank of a master to Constable, and considers him merely an industrious amateur. Leslie certainly placed him in the very first rank of masters. This difference of opinion is interesting as an example of the hopelessness of unanimity in judgments about art. Mr. Ruskin's method of study is not such as to lead him naturally to any right appreciation of Constable. Mr. Ruskin draws definite objects with delicate precision and often in outline, nearly always seeking for beauty of line, as especially in his beautiful drawings of leaves and branches, and mountain contours. Constable seems to have been constitutionally indifferent to this kind of beauty; he did not see lines, but spaces, and in the spaces he did not see simple gradations, but an immense variety of differently coloured sparkles and spots. This variety really exists in nature, and Constable first directed attention to it. Then again, he cared comparatively little for the repose of nature, much for what seemed to him her *life*. He liked broken weather, and fitful breezes, and passing clouds; and, in general, any condition of things which would give movement and glitter. And he preferred

[1] At the time when I knew Leslie he often talked to me about Constable, and tried to make me see his merits; but although I was always ready to spend any number of hours in looking at Constable's works, and could listen with pleasure to all Leslie had to say in their favour, I did not really care about them. They seemed to me to lack delicacy of observation, because Constable did not seek after the qualities I thought most necessary, whilst he aimed at other qualities which, for my ignorance, did not so much as exist in nature, as they certainly had never been recognized by any previous art. It is only very lately that I find myself able to understand Constable, and this degree of enlightenment has been forced upon me—as art-knowledge usually is on everybody—by the difficulties of practical work. Finding great defects in my own manner of painting, I perceived at last that they were due to the absence of those very qualities which in Constable's pictures are always most conspicuously present, and which had for Leslie a charm so seductive.

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homely landscape to noble landscape, probably from early association with homely scenery of a kind which is apt to gain a peculiar hold upon the affections. In all these tastes of his he differed widely from the tastes of Mr. Ruskin, and as his art was new it was necessarily empirical. These reasons may in some measure account for Mr. Ruskin's aversion to it. Constable, however, has had wide influence. In France, Troyon and the Bonheurs have looked to him, and all the best modern French landscape is due to the hints he gave. That landscape is now the most influential in Europe; it is even probable that its influence may extend itself to England. It is possible that, in this roundabout way, Constable may ultimately exercise more lasting power over landscape-art even in England than any of his contemporaries. Leslie's high opinion of him is supported by artistic opinions of great weight. Troyon's opinion, especially, is of weight, for Troyon himself was a landscape-painter of extraordinary power. Mr. Ruskin's recorded verdict may, on the other hand, operate usefully as a check; there is much in nature which Constable failed to render, and if his influence became consecrated and unquestioned, it would be necessary to insist on certain very important truths which he either unconsciously missed, or consciously sacrificed as incompatible with those novel qualities he aimed at.

The only criticism which would apply to the "Handbook" is disarmed by its title. A collection of lectures, intended for young men, must necessarily recapitulate much that is already known; and the defect of the work, as it appears to those who are already acquainted with artistic tradition, is its want of novelty. The publication of a work may be advisable on one of two different grounds. If, as in the case of "Modern Painters," it expresses opinions and calls attention to facts hitherto wholly unknown, it ought to be published for the benefit of the most cultivated; but if, as in the case of Leslie's "Handbook," it chiefly contains old ideas newly worded, it may still be desirable that it should be published for the benefit of the least cultivated, those to whom these ideas are not yet familiar, in any shape, and who may be benefited by having them presented clearly and conveniently. It may be observed, moreover, that Leslie had a constant habit of introducing any original opinion of his own

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by first repeating a commonplace; and that hasty readers, alighting on the commonplaces, and deterred by them from going farther, might easily conclude that the book contained nothing else. He had also a way of *telling* facts that everybody knows, instead of merely alluding to them; as, for instance, speaking of Cornaro, he says, "The fine old man, whose life, by an extraordinary system of temperance, was protracted to a hundred years," instead of saying, "Luigi Cornaro, the centenarian," which would have recalled the story of his temperance to everyone.

Leslie was usually a safe guide. Even when most inclined to differ from him, I have always found, in the end, as for example in the case of Constable, that his views were based upon considerations which could not be prudently disregarded. Art is always seen from various points of view, and it is a great advantage when painters like Leslie have afforded us the opportunity of seeing the subject from the ground they occupied. For example: how interesting it is to know that he so fully appreciated the beautiful colouring displayed in the minor arts of the Persians and Chinese! He had true feeling for landscape; and though his information on that branch of art by no means equalled his love of it, still his criticism on Turner is, on the whole, as just as it is temperate and well-weighed. But Leslie much undervalued our contemporary school of landscape-painters in water-colour, and overvalued Claude and Dughet. He knew absolutely nothing about mountains, so that the fine mountain drawing which distinguishes Mr. Newton and a few others of our school of water-colourists was lost upon him, whilst he remained insensible to the absurdities of mountain form so prevalent in the works of the old masters.

Leslie left behind him an autobiography which was a disappointment to me because it contained so little about himself. It is full of amusing anecdotes, but his own inner life remains just as much sealed to us as if he had left nothing. The truth is, that his habit of anecdote was so irresistible that he could not help telling the best he knew about everybody. The purely biographic material does not occupy twenty pages, and even in that Leslie himself is treated almost as much *from the outside* as if the book had been written by another person.

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The most interesting feature of this autobiography is the pleasant picture it gives of a great patron—the Earl of Egremont. The relation that subsisted between Leslie and that nobleman was strictly a relation of patronage, yet an exceedingly pleasant one. Many artists will not allow the title "patron" to be assumed by, or applied to, their customers; some imitate attorneys, and call their customers their "clients." A desire for equality, an honourable wish for independence, or an aversion to favour and obligation, exists in the present day, and makes men naturally impatient of those airs of protection which the patron assumes, or which, when he does *not* assume them, our imagination attaches to the title. When a man buys work, which he desires to possess, *at its fair market price*, he confers no favour. But the true patron really *did* confer favour, and had a fair claim to a kind of consideration quite different from that of ordinary clients and customers. He paid, in the first place, generally far more than the object was worth in the market; he often ordered it when he did not want it, out of a generous impulse to help merit; and in all these transactions he mingled a personal interest and kindness which often added most materially to the happiness of the artist's whole existence. Lord Egremont had the nature of a noble patron. It was his delight to serve and aid men of artistic genius, and he did this with such admirable delicacy that the most sensitive of them were never wounded in their self-respect. His interest in Leslie extended itself to all Leslie's family; Mrs. Leslie and her children were regularly invited to Petworth every year. Extreme benevolence of character, joined to an intelligent appreciation of art, made Lord Egremont what he was—the most perfect example of a patron that ever existed in England. The simple customer or client can never be anything like that; and the relation between artists and great picture-dealers can seldom, I should imagine, have that pleasant interchange of disinterested kindness on the one hand, and willing acknowledgment on the other, which marked the easy intercourse of Leslie and Lord Egremont.[1]

[1] From the anecdotes of this nobleman given in Leslie's autobiography I select the following, both as an illustration of the true politeness and amiability of his character and for its curious resemblance to another story,

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Leslie was a bad autobiographer, because anything but an egotist. Such writers as Montaigne and Benvenuto Cellini make the best autobiographies. Leslie was perhaps too modest to be an egotist, but it may be doubted whether this is so much a question of modesty as some critics imagine A man's attention may be drawn to himself by his own sense of inferiority and desire to correct his own defects. Montaigne was a great egotist, but not in the least disposed to over estimate his own powers in anything, and no one was ever more truly modest, that is, more clearly aware of his own

of an old French nobleman, related by the Countess de Bassanville. I have italicised the points of coincidence.

"As his lordship, *from that 'put-up-ability' of his character* which Beechey noticed, *seldom changed his servants, some of the upper ones were as old as himself; and these not being in livery, and his own dress,* in the morning, *being very plain, he was sometimes* by strangers *mistaken for one of them.* This happened *with a maid of one of his lady guests, who had not been at Petworth before. She met him, crossing the hall, as the bell was ringing for his servants' dinner,* and said: '*Come, old gentleman, you and I will go to dinner together, for I can't find my way in this great house.' He gave her his arm, and led her to the room where the other maids were assembled at their table,* and said: '*You dine here,* I don't dine till seven o'clock.'"

Here is the French anecdote :—

"Simple, doux, bienveillant et bienfaisant, le duc *ne changeait jamais de domestiques.* Quelques uns de ses gens, qui avaient vieilli dans sa maison, *se trouvaient donc de son âge.*

"Or, comme ils *ne portaient pas de livrée,* et que *le costume de leur maître était fort simple, on le prit* souvent *lui-même pour l'un de ses gens,* et cette méprise fut commise de la façon la plus plaisante par *une jeune femme de chambre attachée à la baronne* de Gir. . . ., qui, *pour la première fois,* avait été conviée à passer l'automne au château.

"Cette fille, qui n'avait pas encore vu le duc, *le rencontra en traversant le vestibule, au moment où l'on sonnait le déjeûner des domestiques, et,* s'avançant vivement vers lui :

"'*Allons, mon bonhomme,*' lui dit-elle en montrant ses dents blanches dans un gai sourire, 'donnez-moi le bras *pour me conduire à l'office, où nous allons déjeûner. J'ai peur de me perdre dans cette grande halle de château!*'

"Le duc, de l'air le plus sérieux du monde, *offrit le bras à la soubrette;* puis, *l'ayant conduite à l'office, où les autres domestiques se trouvaient réunis:*

"'*Voilà où vous déjeûnerez,*' *lui dit-il;* 'mais je ne puis le faire avec vous, car j'ai déjà mangé là-haut.'"

The coincidences are so numerous and so very extraordinary, even in the smallest details, that if Madame de Bassanville's duke had not been the husband of one of her most intimate friends, one would be strongly tempted to believe that Leslie's story of Lord Egremont had crossed the Channel and assumed a French dress.

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imperfections. Leslie left a strong impression on all who knew him that he was remarkably unassuming, but this may have been due in some measure to his complete success in life. His merits were recognized to the full; he rose from a position of poverty and obscurity to competence and fame. He was the beloved friend and associate of some of the most distinguished Englishmen of his time. He had not a single claim to consideration which was not liberally allowed, *and allowed early*, before he had had time to become embittered in that struggle for mere recognition which so often injures the character of aspirants. His relations with the world were always easy and agreeable. He had no troublesome convictions of a nature to disturb the serenity of his attitude towards the beliefs or prejudices of his contemporaries. No grievous social wrong or injustice galled him as Shelley was galled; no ridicule stiffened him, as it did Wordsworth, into solemn self-assertion. He afforded a refined pleasure, and was richly rewarded for so doing; he amused the great world, and the great world gave him its smiles and welcome. Such natures are happy and enviable, but they are not the natures to which Heaven delegates its stern work and strong authority. Great poets and great thinkers, without being less modest at heart than Leslie was, have capacities of earnestness and emotion which lift them from time to time into states of such intense conviction about things, that they utterly forget discretion. Leslie never, either in writing or painting, had these passionate and inspired moments. He never forgot to be discreet.

The one point in which Leslie excelled all other painters was vivacity and truth in delicate shades of passing expression. This rare gift was sustained and supported in Leslie by an extraordinary refinement—a refinement so natural to him, and so very perfect, that all he painted, or said, or wrote, or did, was sure, however questionable occasionally on other grounds, to be in irreproachably good taste. He was by no means profoundly intellectual, not a deep thinker; indeed, the most familiar ideas of modern philosophy were apparently unknown to him; he was not an extensive reader, nor original in his choice of books; he read a few of the best English classics, and Molière, Cervantes, and Le Sage, and every morning the articles in the *Times*. But, as I remember thinking when he read Pope's "Rape of the Lock" to us before the picture,

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his reading was not like other men's reading. He saw and realized every personage in his clear inventive brain; he felt the exact value of every carefully chosen epithet; he understood, with a fineness of sympathy which proved his true brotherhood with great geniuses, the subtlest intentions of his author. Lovers of good acting who may have had the great pleasure of hearing Samson at the *Théâtre Français*, will have seen operating, in another but kindred art, the workings of an intelligence akin to Leslie's. Leslie was only an interpreter of literature, not a creator of new types, and so ranks with the greatest actors in refined comedy. A painter of this kind has, however, one claim which actors cannot have, he can demonstrate his accurate understanding of female character. Leslie's women are pre-eminent for all feminine graces; his ladies are the best-bred women in the world of painting; even his servant girls are vivacious without vulgarity. It is needless to say that Leslie's gentlemen *are* gentlemen; that follows necessarily from the fact that Leslie was himself a gentleman, of which nobody who knew him, and was qualified to form an opinion, could ever entertain a doubt.

For merely artistic qualities, on the other hand, his claims are far less considerable. His colour faculty was by nature so feeble, that he only attained by great labour such a degree of power as would barely save his pictures from giving offence. Now and then, in accessories, he achieved passages of really beautiful colour, which are too generally overlooked by his critics; but the plain truth is, that he never could paint flesh. I attach little importance to the popular objection about his "chalkiness," because colour quite as bad as Leslie's escapes this censure by very simple expedients which anybody may learn. It was rather to Leslie's honour that he should have disdained the shining browns and warm yellows, which, whether true or false, make colour *comfortable* to the popular eye, and tried earnestly for the true tints. In early life, as he told me himself, he could not appreciate colour in the works of other men, but by dint of hard study he came to appreciate it afterwards, and, when I knew him, unaffectedly enjoyed it. All that humility, and patience, and laborious practice and observation could do to make him a colourist they did for him; and his best works prove that he very well knew what the qualities of good colour are. His faculty was weak and imperfect

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rather than false, and, poor as his colour is, it is better than very much which the world quite readily accepts.

Leslie's system of chiaroscuro was true and luminous, and entirely free from those contradictory violences of opposition which delight ignorant people in Gustave Doré. His knowledge of reflections was especially accurate.

His drawing was as good as that of most of his contemporaries, but not remarkable as drawing, except perhaps for its entire absence of false pretension. There is, however, much inequality in his pictures in this respect—forms being at one time felt with delicacy, whilst at others we get an abstract in which natural curvature and projection are considerably stiffened and flattened, so as to give an appearance of rigidity, which, being usually combined with some opacity of colour, repels the spectator. When one compares Leslie with living rivals, it appears that in technical points he was far inferior to such men as Stevens, Heilbuth, Meissonier, Gérôme, and (especially) Plassan, but superior to any one of them in intelligence. Heilbuth, however, is a great master of quiet expression, and possesses much of that kind of subtle observation which distinguished Leslie.

Finally, there can be no doubt that Leslie is amongst the immortals. His pictures will live as great masterpieces of perception. For his writings on art no independent immortality could be predicted; if he were not famous on other grounds, the "Handbook" would not redeem him from oblivion. Of these things, however, the pictures and the writings, posterity will judge for itself; and in the end, I doubt not, judge truly. But as to the *man*, posterity must be content to form its opinion on our testimony; and as I began this paper by asserting that, in this instance, the private man was as good as the public one, so I will conclude it by reverting to those qualities which did not exhibit themselves in print or on the walls of the Royal Academy.

Thackeray, in a carefully-written paper published in the *Cornhill Magazine* soon after Leslie's death, chose three epithets wherewith to characterize him. They were well weighed, no doubt; and it is interesting to see what that great novelist, whose life was passed in the searching study of human nature, considered the most striking attributes of his dead friend. His genius, of course, Thackeray, with his sense of humour

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and love of art, could not fail to enjoy; but these three epithets say nothing about the genius: *The good, the gentle, the beloved.* Those are the chosen words. They are simply accurate and just. Leslie's goodness was a serene habit, his gentleness a proverb, and all who knew him loved him. —1866.

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XXI.

PICTURE-DEALERS.

During the last few years a change of very great importance has taken place in the relation of painters towards the public. A class of middlemen has arisen, who intervene between artists and buyers, and these middlemen have acquired great power and influence in the world of art. As it happens that many pictures exhibited in London, especially pictures exhibited in the winter season, are the property of these dealers, it may be worth while to attempt a deliberate examination of this branch of commerce.

A picture-dealer is usually a tradesman, not only by position, but by nature. He is simply a merchant, whose business it is first to buy what he knows is likely to sell, and then to make the public buy it of him at a profit; the larger the profit he gets, and the more quickly he turns over his money, the more successful he is as a merchant. The mental elements of success do not in his case consist in a delicately critical appreciation of art, or in any romantic passion for it; indeed, feelings of this kind would only be likely to divert him from his main purpose, which is to get rid of his acquisitions as fast as possible. The lover of art who buys a picture to keep it and look at it every day of his life, and make a companion of it, must necessarily regard the picture very differently from the dealer whose happiest anticipation with respect to it refers to the wished-for moment when it will finally leave his possession. The difference between them is the difference between a gentleman who buys an estate to live upon and a speculator who invests in land because its value is rising, with the inten-

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tion of selling it again to the best advantage. We may therefore assume, as a general rule, that the dealer will not buy pictures on æsthetic grounds, but simply with a view to the state of the market. But there is yet a further consideration of even greater importance. The dealer may influence the market, and cause an augmentation in the value of such goods as he has on hand. That he will often be unscrupulous in doing this we may rest assured. We do not attach the slightest weight or credence to the favourable opinions expressed by dealers as to the merits of their own goods. We believe that every dealer who does not rise considerably above the usual level of commercial morality will tell his customers everything favourable to the artists who work for him which the customers are likely to believe. He will first ascertain the direction of public opinion, and then push it actively in that direction. It is certain that dealers of low character talk the most amazing nonsense to people whom they take to be fools. Some years ago a gentleman presented himself at a very famous picture-shop in Paris, and begged to be allowed to examine a few landscapes by Lambinet. He was taken for a wealthy English patron, and the comedy that followed beggars all description. He rather enjoyed the joke, and assumed the airs of a rich man ignorant of art, merely to see what the shopman *would* say and do. He pretended to be tempted by a particular picture with a bridge and a bright sky. The salesman asserted that the mellowing effects of time would turn the Lambinet into a Claude; and as there was a little dark burnt umber under the woodwork of the bridge, he said that when the picture was varnished no one would know it again. In proof of this he resorted to an expedient which seemed habitual with him. He varnished the bridge provisionally with his own saliva, and then threw himself into an attitude of ecstatic admiration, appealing to his customer if it were not wonderful. Of course our friend affected astonishment at the marvellous result, and as he seemed exactly the right fish to catch, many other baits were held out to him, and the saliva process was frequently repeated. When this had lasted about an hour our friend had heard such a quantity of downright nonsense that he was utterly sick of it, but congratulated himself on the acquisition of a little experience. He had at least learned how picture-dealers estimate their public;

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he had learned that the public is not supposed to know the difference between unvarnished work and work heightened by saliva or copal, and that it is considered gullible enough to believe that a system of colouring may become another system of colouring when a picture has been kept for a few years. Everyone must have experienced the annoyance of going to see a dealer's picture which is to be engraved in "the highest style of art," which means a cheap and rapid mixture of mezzotint and etching with machine ruling and a little burin work. In these cases the dealer is accustomed to employ a gentleman whose chief attainment is a smooth and plausible eloquence. He always descants on some remarkable quality which makes the work before him the finest of the kind ever produced. He tells you how many thousand pounds have been paid for it, and for the right to engrave it. He leads you gently towards a table, usually covered with green cloth, on which rest two framed prints—one a finished plate in the "style" to be followed in the present instance, and the other a proof of the already commenced etching from the picture before you. All kinds of schemes are resorted to. We remember a picture of the Battle of Trafalgar, where the showman employed was a sailor who had two claims upon our respect; he had served on board the *Victory*, and knew nothing about pictures, so that he held his tongue except when people questioned him, on which he simply pointed out the gun he had served during the fight. The showman is not always so judiciously selected. He usually gets you to the green table, and tries to make you write your name in a book. To attain this end, he will tell you anything that you may like to hear. A visitor once astonished one of these gentlemen by telling him that, if he bothered him any longer, a complaint would be made to his employers; and the complaint *was* made, on which the dealer excused his subordinate by representing that he was quite the right sort of man to get subscribers in country towns, and that the talk which was so tiresome to the stranger, was, on whole, beneficial to the interests of the firm. The dealer added, however, that a less obtrusive salesman was found to succeed in London.

Assuming that the dealer wishes to sell, and recommends his goods in the manner which experience proves to be most efficacious, we cannot be far wrong in concluding that a kind

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of art which, however degraded, is popular, will be encouraged by him, and rendered, if possible, more popular still. The advice of the common dealer to young artists is like the counsel of Mephistopheles. It is simply to cultivate the qualities which sell, and to neglect the aims which the public cannot understand; in other words, to be diligently commercial, and abandon art. One of the most lamentable results of this system is a hampering of artistic development by tying down the artist to a repetition of work already done. An artist becomes known for a particular class of subjects; he has already, perhaps, exhausted the feeling of interest which first attacted him to these subjects, but the dealer dares not let him wander into new fields, because such wanderings would not be safe in the commercial sense. We will give an instance of this without mentioning names. A very able artist became known to dealers for his admirable views of Venice; but, although Venice is very beautiful, he discovered, after some years spent in the repetition of canals and gondolas, that change of some sort was desirable. This change he sought in the Pyrenees, and he made many very beautiful drawings there. The dealers still asked for Venice; and, though they admitted the merits of the new subjects from the Pyrenees, they did not buy any, nor give any commissions for pictures from them, for it was not safe to do so. One day a very famous dealer called in our friend's studio. He gave two commissions for large pictures at a liberal price. The order was given in less than ten minutes, and the cheque was punctually sent when the pictures were afterwards delivered; this punctuality in the sending of large cheques being one of the great charms of dealers. But the subjects selected were the "Ducal Palace," and the "Grand Canal," the two most hackneyed subjects in Christendom, which the artist had already painted a hundred times. When the dealer departed, the painter turned to us and said, with a sad look, "You see they keep me to it still, but how weary I am of Venice!" Meanwhile, the rich portfolio from the Pyrenees lay unopened. Now what took place in this instance with regard to Venice is continually repeated in other forms. Every artist has his Venice. The encouragement of the dealer may become a slavery; a man who has to keep a family cannot resist gold when no moral principle is involved. Considerations which are merely artistic go to the winds before

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the great duty of providing for one's children. Poverty is liberty compared to this. There are artists who are so poor that they can, with a safe conscience, devote themselves to high aims. There are other artists who are so successful in a lower way that they cannot conscientiously sacrifice time to a higher ambition. A poor but noble painter said the other day —"It must be very pleasant to earn fifteen pounds a day, but it has the drawback that one could not spend half an hour in thinking without the reflection that one's thought had cost a sovereign." And when the dealer urges the wisdom of abandoning the higher aims, when his voice is the voice of prudence and all the wise advisers are with him, what hope is there for the artist in any virtue short of perfect heroism? And the heroism, when it exists, is so often wasted because unaccompanied by sufficient genius or not crowned with length of days!

We have said what may be truly said against the influence of dealers, and will now offer some considerations on the other side. Before dealers came into the modern picture-market prices were low. The dealers have done more than any other class to enhance the market value of modern art. They may do this by puffing their own pictures, but the mere fact that many modern works have, through their agency, fetched great prices, has increased the general scale of payment to contemporary artists. They seek, of course, as all merchants do, a profit on their acquisitions, and this profit is in some instances very large, a hundred per cent. or more; but the profit they seek varies with the risk they run. A dealer does not usually profit very much, in a direct way, by his speculations in the works of men who would be sure of customers without him, and when he expects a large profit it is because he is not sure of an immediate return. When an artist of established reputation, as, for instance, Gérôme or Meissonier, sells to a dealer, he does not do so under the pressure of necessity, but because he finds the transaction convenient to himself. When a struggling artist sells to a dealer, he knowingly sacrifices a chance of future advantage to the certainty of immediate payment. The reasons why artists go to dealers are mainly these —It is more satisfactory to sell to a dealer than to a "patron," because the transaction involves no subsequent hesitation or annoyance. Commissions received directly from gentlemen

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are almost invariably attended by the unpleasant feeling that, although the gentleman has paid for his work, it may not quite suit him when he sees it. Even eminent artists complain that work done on commission direct from collectors leads to frequent misunderstandings. With the dealer these misunderstandings are much less likely to occur, because he looks on the matter simply as one of business. In short, the dealer and the artist understand each other more readily than the artist and his unprofessional customer. On the other hand, the buyer goes to a dealer for a reason of his own. He does not trust himself. He feels his ignorance of art, and hesitates to buy that which has not before been bought. An ordinary buyer is more disposed to give seven hundred pounds for a picture which a dealer has bought for five hundred than to give five hundred directly to the artist. The best recommendation for any picture is for it to have fetched already a considerable price. If buyers believed in their own judgment, of course the dealer would cease to exist; but there is no probability of this, and the dealer knows that his place is secure.

One point only remains to be considered. Is it an advantage to artists, or the contrary, that dealers should sell their works at prices needlessly high—at prices, we mean, much more than enough to remunerate the artist, and of which he receives one-half, or two-thirds, or three-quarters, as the case may be? We have often talked over this with painters, and they uniformly tell us that, when they have sold works to a dealer, the higher the price he is able to get for them the greater the advantage to the artist, because it raises the prices which he himself can afterwards obtain in dealing directly with the public; and since the public in a great measure estimates painters by the money they earn, a painter rises in position whenever the dealer is enabled to get a higher figure for his work. And, for a reason already stated, the public is more willing to give an extravagant price to a dealer than to the artist himself; and though this may sound as if the dealer, by putting himself between the two, intercepted a portion of the profit which would flow into the artist's purse, this is only in appearance, because without the dealer the artist would not sell directly to the public for so much as he now accepts from the dealer himself. The fact is, that the art of painting a picture and the art of selling one are two entirely distinct

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things, and the tendency now is to a separation of the two. If buyers are willing to give hundreds of pounds for the *imprimatur* of a great dealer, they pay, in doing so, the natural penalty of ignorance. If they would really take the trouble to study art, they might save the dealer's profit. At present, a picture is like a doubtful commercial bill which requires endorsement; the dealer endorses it, and takes a large percentage for his risk.—1867.

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XXII.

THORVALDSEN.

In the month of September, 1838, a Danish frigate entered the Sound between Sweden and Denmark, and, as there was little wind, and that contrary, anchored off Helsingöer. The next morning a steamer with deputations from both countries came to welcome the frigate with all signs of rejoicing—flags, and songs, and musical bands. This frigate, the *Rota*, had been sent to Italy to fetch an exalted personage, who now came to Denmark with a suite of attendants and sixty large cases of luggage. Copenhagen was in a state of the utmost excitement. The people were in such a fervid condition of mind that they observed the phenomena of the sky with a superstitious readiness to accept and interpret them as omens. An aurora borealis shone in the heavens when the frigate lay all night off Helsingöer, and when she became visible to the inhabitants of Copenhagen it was under the arch of a bright rainbow. A little fleet of boats, decorated with flags, and bearing each one a deputation from some profession or trade, went to meet the ship, and surrounded her. Two gentlemen had been selected as spokesmen, and these mounted the quarter-deck, where they expressed to the illustrious visitor the delight of the Danish people at his arrival amongst them. A gracious and even cordial reception and reply were given to these gentlemen by the visitor, and at the same instant there arose from the fleet of boats a hymn in his honour, composed expressly for the occasion by a national poet. Then the deputations in the boats climbed the ship's side, and in an instant crowded her decks from stem to stern. So great was the number of people on board that accidents were feared, and

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the illustrious stranger was humbly entreated not to delay his landing, on which he descended into a boat, which the little fleet soon afterwards surrounded. Then the yards were manned by the sailors, and the sailors cheered. And from the crowded quays of Copenhagen rose a shout of answering welcome that did not cease, but renewed itself continually. On his landing, the visitor was received by a public body, and when he stepped into his carriage the horses were unharnessed and the people dragged it to the palace of Charlottenborg. There, for a time, he was lost to the gaze of the multitude, but the multitude clamoured for him, and he showed himself on a balcony, on which thousands became half delirious with joy. The square was so crowded, we are told, that the equestrian statue of Christian V. seemed to swim in an agitated sea, and boys hung in bunches from the gas-lamps. The palace was garlanded with flowers, and at night there was a procession with torches in honour of the hero of the day. For many days afterwards he could get no rest; it was an endless round of banquets and congratulation, and all the inhabitants of the capital who had any claim to position waited upon the visitor. The newspapers were full of him, every minute detail of his existence was recorded, and every morning brought him such quantities of letters, petitions, and invitations, that he found it impossible to read them, and had to employ a gentleman for the purpose. He had so many crosses and stars that he made a little cabinet of them, and showed them to his friends as one of his collections. He was on terms of the greatest intimacy with persons of the most exalted rank, and when the King of Denmark came to ask him to dinner, he declined, without embarrassment, on account of a previous engagement, setting aside the universal rule that an invitation from the Sovereign cancels all others.

This illustrious personage, for whom a royal frigate was sent to Italy, and who was received by a whole nation with as much enthusiasm as if he had been its king, and a popular king too, was a sculptor of the classical school, called Albert Thorvaldsen, the son of a poor ship-carpenter in Copenhagen. No artist of this century has been more famous. In comparison with his celebrity, that of Turner, for instance, was perfect obscurity. This Thorvaldsen went from Copenhagen to Rome, and was received in every city with public hospitality and rejoicing.

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If he passed near a court, the king invited him to his palace; if he passed near a seat of learning or the fine arts, deputations of *savants* or artists saluted him with flattery so unmeasured that the wonder is how he could endure to listen to it. But he seems to have taken all this very easily, and on the whole to have rather enjoyed it, though without much flutter of vanity. It would have turned the brain of any man of Southern race; but Thorvaldsen, thanks to his tough Northern organization, bore it without any dangerous excitement. The most curious fact about it is, when we think of it, that this man was a sculptor, and that even of the cultivated classes not one person in fifty knows anything whatever about sculpture, or can tell first-rate from fifth-rate work when he sees it; and if we reflect further that a whole nation went mad about Thorvaldsen, we may be sure that the proportion of his adorers who adored on critical grounds must have been quite infinitesimally small, perhaps one in five hundred. Human nature is a curious study in many ways, and few of its peculiarities are more astonishing than its capacity for feeling intense enthusiasm about things of which it is absolutely ignorant, and will not take the trouble to inform itself. The enthusiasm of all these Danes about Thorvaldsen was strong enough to make them shout and sing and drag his carriage through the streets of Copenhagen, but it was not enough to make them study art and ascertain for themselves the merits of the artist. All this they found it easier to take for granted, and the faith which takes things for granted was never more vigorously manifested. We understand more easily a national madness about a soldier, or a ruler, or a religious teacher; but to see a little Northern people, usually remarkable for soberness and practical sense, going almost out of its wits about a sculptor who imitated the antique, is not this really extraordinary? If the Norwegians had a national enthusiasm for Tidemand the painter, this would be more intelligible, because he is Northern and national in feeling, and painting is a far more popular art than sculpture; but that the Danes should have been so delighted with a maker of pseudo-antique statues, however skilful the imitation, passes all understanding. If they had known Thorvaldsen personally very well, we might have attributed their adoration to a liking for the man; but they knew next to nothing about him, for he had always been an absentee, and though, when he came back,

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his long white hair and nice venerable look were of the greatest use to him, still the enthusiasm was already at fever-point before the white locks came in sight on the *Rota*.

The explanation of the Thorvaldsen mania in Denmark is that Denmark is a small country, and felt itself elevated by the European fame of one of its children. London takes the celebrity of its artists more coolly than Copenhagen, but it is fair to add that no artist born in London has ever yet achieved a tithe of the continental glory of Thorvaldsen. How this immense fame was acquired we already know. Like most of the great officially recognized celebrities in modern art, Thorvaldsen tied his little boat behind the good old ship the Antique, and was towed triumphantly into port. There was a time—and this sculptor had the good luck to establish himself in Rome exactly at that time—when the princes and great people in Europe were much interested in antique art. They were not very particular about the quality of it; they felt about antique art generally a readiness to accept anything it had to offer—something like the disposition of many country clergymen in regard to Gothic, who have a reverence for pointed arches and old tracery generally, and have not yet acquired the audacity to discriminate between the good and bad art of the Middle Ages. Thorvaldsen fell in with the humour of the time, and produced works which entirely satisfied his patrons. They all seem to have been perfectly delighted with him, except with his tardiness in the delivery of work commissioned. He would accept any quantity of commissions and establish any number of studios, where he kept a staff of workmen constantly employed in copying his clay models. He understood the art of economizing his own labour, and worked but little in marble, retouching the statues made by his workmen, but not carving much himself. His view of the art of the sculptor was that unfortunately too prevalent in modern times, that it consisted in making clay models. Even in the clay itself Thorvaldsen found means of availing himself of the labours of others. He often sketched the subject roughly in clay, then entrusted it to one of his subordinates to work up to a semi-finish, and retouched finally himself. The quantity of work he left behind him would seem inexplicably large if these facts were not taken into consideration. It must also be remembered that his life was exceptionally long and laborious.

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M. Plon's biography is clearly and agreeably written, and we have read it through with great interest. But it has not altered the opinion of Thorvaldsen's personal character which we had formed from what was before known of him. M. Plon's hero is not a man whom we can either love or respect. There are passages in his life which indicate a total absence of honour, and a shameful lack of manly frankness and courage. A Scottish lady, of good family, whose name, with utter want of delicacy, M. Plon gives in full, was unfortunate enough to place her affections on the unworthy sculptor, who for a time encouraged the belief that they were returned. When a marriage between this lady and Thorvaldsen was considered as settled—when everybody in Rome, and the lady's friends in Scotland, talked of it publicly as a certainty—Thorvaldsen suddenly deserted her to form a connection with a married woman from Vienna, who lived in the same street and in the opposite house, so that Miss —— had the mortification of actually seeing him day after day going and coming from his visits there. The delicacy of this piece of conduct is exactly on a par with his arrangements with a mistress of his called Anna Maria. This woman, who was a sort of superior lady's-maid at a house where Thorvaldsen visited, joined the amusements in which he also took part, and let him seduce her. Some time afterwards, when she had already lived as his mistress, she improved her social position by a marriage with a gentleman who was much her superior in station, but, before the marriage, actually made Thorvaldsen sign an agreement to provide for her maintenance in case of a domestic rupture. This rupture naturally took place when the unfortunate husband found out his wife's true character, and Thorvaldsen, in virtue of the written agreement, found himself saddled with this woman, who governed him imperiously for years after. The two connections, with this Anna Maria and the Austrian lady, were going on at the time when he ought to have married Miss ——. We should like to know what became of Thorvaldsen's poor old parents during his prosperity at Rome. We have some recollection that, according to another biographer, he allowed his old father to be sent to an asylum. It is certain that, from the time he left Copenhagen as a lad to the time when he came back like a king in a royal ship, he never once either visited his father and mother, or paid their expenses to Rome; and they

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never set eyes on their son in the days of his celebrity, but toiled on obscurely in their narrow life at Copenhagen. Surely Thorvaldsen cannot have had a really noble nature, or he would have found a deeper pleasure in making his parents witnesses and sharers in his prosperity than in the friendship of his greatest patrons.

It would be unjust, however, to paint this man's character entirely in foul colours. Much of his negligence of duty may be attributable to absorption in his occupation, and to his utter ignorance of everything but his trade. Readers who have taken the trouble to study the uneducated classes must have observed that they are less alive to certain forms of duty than those above them, and, without any intention of doing wrong, they act often with what seems to us great hardness and indifference. Now Thorvaldsen was always quite illiterate. A maker of clay models, not a man of cultivated mind, he belonged all his life to the uneducated classes. He acquired, by contact, some colloquial use of other languages than his own, and, from constantly mixing in society, some external polish of manner sufficient for the external relations of life. But he never had any delicacy. For instance, Mr. Hope, his first patron, was the cause of all his success. Thorvaldsen was leaving Rome in despair of ever doing anything there; his portmanteaus were packed, and all that hindered his departure was a delay about a passport, when Mr. Hope saved him by a generous and liberal commission. This was in the year 1803. Long before Mr. Hope's statue was finished the artist received other orders, and though Mr. Hope had actually advanced part of the price of the statue, and though he frequently wrote about it, the statue was not delivered to him till the year 1828, Thorvaldsen having executed a hundred things for others in the interval. Now we think that conduct of this kind implies a dulness of perception which is happily rare amongst educated men, but we are willing to admit, in palliation of it, the artist's absorption in other and pressing ideas, and the torpidity of a mind never awakened by education to clear notions of duty and honour. Nothing is said by M. Plon about Thorvaldsen's religious views. He was not a Christian, but notwithstanding this he might have had a more admirable character. Many honourable and just men, whose lives are pure and whose ideal of duty is high, are unbelievers, and there

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are so many instances of this kind that we cannot admit unbelief as an excuse for failure in duty. The too common habit of saying, "He was an infidel, therefore he was free to do wrong," has the tendency to emancipate sceptics themselves from the sense of duty and obligation. We would rather remind them that, since so many of their number have been capable of rectitude, they must all be held responsible members of society.

Let us close this notice with a pleasant trait. Thorvaldsen, in his utmost height of fame, never scorned poor people. At the time of his full, ripe glory in Copenhagen he actually wanted to eat with his servants, who were man and wife, in order to save the woman the trouble of two services. He was economical to parsimony, and his personal expenses were trifling; but he was liberal in donations, and this liberality had to be restrained and controlled by one of his friends, who became a sort of secretary to him. It has been said that he was fond of smoking and drinking; but so, in a moderate convivial way, are many excellent men, and an entire indifference to these pleasures is usually the sign either of an unsocial disposition or of indifferent health. There must have been something personally attractive in Thorvaldsen, or he could not have had so many and such kind friends.—1868.

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XXIII.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ETCHING.

THERE is great need of a word in the English language, and, so far as I know, in other languages also, which would express, in a manner so perfectly courteous that nobody could take offence at it, what we mean by the phrase, *persons ignorant of art.* If we say "the laity," borrowing the old clerical form, we are courteous, but we do not exactly say what we mean, because a layman in this sense is merely a person who is not professionally an artist, and it does not follow that he is ignorant of art. If, on the other hand, we plainly use the word "ignorant," or any word which means the same thing, we seem to be guilty of rudeness and contempt towards the immense majority of the public, and an unfortunate impression is conveyed that we are proud of our own superior knowledge, when in reality we are simply aware of a difference which is the natural result of a different employment of time and effort, and which, in all other human occupations, is regarded by everyone as inevitable. It is still more dangerous to use the word "vulgar," although we may attach no contemptuous meaning to it, because in ordinary conversation it is associated with the idea of ill-breeding.

It might, perhaps, be permitted us to attempt the introduction of a term which has no associations of reproach. A person ignorant of art might be called an "atechnic," a man not technically instructed. It is true that the word bears more a practical than a theoretical sense, but this would not be a reason for rejecting it, since the rudiments of critical knowledge can only be acquired practically, and no one ever saw

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form or colour delicately enough to criticise well whose eye had not been educated by practical artistic study. It would be an awkward lengthening of the word to have to compound it with γνωστικός, so as to express connoisseurship.

In every fine art there is much which is illegible by atechnics, and this is due to the habits of interpretation into which artists always fall, and which grow upon them with the increase of their culture. For reasons which have already been explained by the best English and Continental writers upon art in books which are widely circulated, and which it is unnecessary to quote, the fine arts are less imitative than interpretative, and the nobler the artist the more frankly interpretative he is. Now, there is always, in artistic interpretation, a considerable element of conventionalism; the artist begins with a set of postulates of which the simplest and most familiar is the postulate about the line, which might be worded thus: "Let it be granted that the line, though it does not exist in nature, may be admitted in art for the sake of the forms which may be defined by it." A liberal criticism is always willing to grant all the postulates which may be necessary to the free development of an art. In oil-painting there is an important postulate about light—"Let it be granted that white lead may mean the highest sunlight;" and there are also other postulates about colour, which might easily be expressed, if they did not carry us somewhat beyond the subject of this paper.

Etching may be defined as the stenography of artistic thought, and there exists in etching an amount of conventionalism scarcely less than that which exists in all other stenographies. But as there are good and bad stenographies, so there are good and bad styles in etching, and these may be distinguished by reason, aided by artistic perception and experience. Very many systems of shorthand writing have been invented, and it may appear to persons who have not studied shorthand—to persons who, as regards shorthand, are atechnics—that it is not easy to decide which is the best; whereas, since all the systems of shorthand aim only at two results, and at the same two results—namely, to be as rapid as possible and as legible as possible—and since, in compliance with the first of these, only the very simplest lines and the very simplest curves are admissible, the question of relative merit narrows itself to one of intelligent combination; and, after

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comparing several systems of shorthand, it is easy to see which system answers its purpose best. In the same way, since etching proposes to itself the rapid autographic rendering of artistic thought, the best manner in etching, the manner most in conformity with reason, is that which combines the maximum of speed with the maximum of expressional clearness, so that it may be written off whilst the thought is fresh and vivid, and easily read afterwards by the author of it, and by anyone else who has learned to read that kind of artistic writing. All waste of labour, any movement of the hand which is not necessary to the expression of the thought, is a departure from the ideal of the art. But however good and legible an etching may be, it cannot be legible unless we have learned to read it—unless, that is, we have acquired by practice the power of seeing at once through the sign employed the idea signified by it. A time comes ultimately when the sign suggests the natural fact or the artistic idea so instantaneously that we come to look upon the two as inseparable, and cease to be aware of the conventionalism of the sign. As Blake declared that he looked through his corporeal eye, and not with it, so it is not an exaggeration to say that we look through the hurried lines of artistic shorthand, and not at them. For the shorthand in itself is nothing, we care only for the meaning of it. Where the atechnic sees a few irregular horizontal lines at the top of a piece of paper, the artist, by instantaneous association of the sign with the thing signified, beholds the serene sky; where the atechnic sees an undecipherable medley of scrawls and scratches, the artist reads the glory of a sunset amongst the illuminated clouds. The tenderest and noblest poetry leaves us cold if we have never learned the characters in which it is written, and good etching is the poetry of drawing, written down rapidly in shorthand.

It may seem incredible that an art so inoffensive and unpopular should have enemies, but the present writer has known many instances in which fine etchings have appeared to give offence, and it is sometimes not quite safe to confess that they afford you pleasure. If you say you enjoy certain plates of the more rapid and abstract kind, atechnics often consider that you make such professions from an affectation of superior knowledge, and they do not altogether like you for it. A certain amount of circumspection is necessary in the avowal

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of your preferences: for instance, there are plates of Rembrandt, and some of Whistler and Jongkind, which a collector wise in his generation would refrain from exhibiting to atechnics. They have an uneasy suspicion that you are amusing yourself at their expense when you say that these things are of fine quality. If you venture to say so in print, and your book or article should fall into the hands of some thoroughly atechnic reviewer, he will treat you as the victim of monomania.

The explanation of our liking for such art as that is, however, very simple, and ought to be intelligible even to persons who do not find the art itself intelligible to them. It is merely a question of time given, and of excellence attainable within the limits of the time. If you give a month to a piece of work, you do not set about it in the same way as you would if you had only a week to do it in; and if you have only a day, or an hour, or twenty minutes, you will adopt a different system of expression, according to the time you have to give. Now, the best plates of Jongkind are admirable as a very summary statement of an impression; there may be an hour's work in the most elaborate of them, others may have been done in half an hour, or twenty minutes, or ten. Landscape-painters are all in the habit of taking memoranda which *must* be very rapid, because the effects of nature pass so rapidly; and the landscape-painter is obliged to write artistic shorthand to make his reports, just as a reporter in the House of Commons is obliged to write in stenography. The best artistic shorthand is that which notes an impression most perfectly in the time given. The portfolios of landscape-painters are full of memoranda which to atechnics would be quite as unintelligible as the most hurried etchings of Rembrandt or Jongkind; but artists do not exhibit these—they translate them into the more intelligible form of elaborate painting that the atechnics may read them easily, as they read the copied reports in the newspapers when they could not have read the original shorthand report made in the gallery of the House.

It does not follow that we prefer these rapid notes, where form itself has often to be sacrificed to the exigencies of rapidity, to drawings of highly elaborated truth; and it is an unjust misrepresentation of our views to describe us as especially partial to the slight and the incomplete, and indifferent to the noble works of art which have been slowly brought to

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perfection by the efforts of months or years. All that we say is, that this rapid and abstract art is good and valuable in its own kind, and that it has certain special qualities and utilities of its own which do not belong to the arts of elaboration. It is amongst the arts as amongst the characters of men—you have the rapid and decisive characters, and the slow, patient characters. It would be a very narrow view of humanity which would desire to see either of the two suppressed, since each kind is good for uses of its own. And so it would be a narrow view of the fine arts which would desire the suppression either of the art which swiftly notes impressions, or of that which patiently elaborates them. In fact, there exists between the two a certain interdependence. The power of making a swift and comprehensive synthesis must be preceded by elaborate analytical study, whilst, on the other hand, the picture which it takes years to execute must be founded upon a synthetic conception. An art critic who sees the arts in their just relations would be the very last person to deny the value of analysis in study. No man ever executed a fine synthetic etching without having gone through the most patient analysis; and when atechnic reviewers accuse us of being carried away by an especial enthusiasm for etching which blinds us to the value of elaborated work in other arts, they little know how large a share analysis must have in the education of the swiftest aquafortists.

The question whether elaborate or summary expression needs the higher artistic accomplishment is answered in opposite ways by different artists and theorists, and is, indeed, one of those questions which seem equally to suggest two opposite solutions. We will endeavour to state the arguments on both sides with equal force.

It may be argued that elaborate expression requires greater knowledge, because the mere elaboration or finish is in itself the adding of more truth. For instance, if you take a rapid etching or other memorandum from nature, and paint a picture from it, you have to add more form, you have to add many subdivisions of light and dark, and you have to add colour. A picture, therefore, it may be argued, contains all that an etching of the same subject and equal quality contains, whilst it also contains much more, and, therefore, to produce it greater knowledge and ability are needed. This is the view

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most generally received, not only by atechnics, but by many artists and by some critics.

On the other hand, it may be argued, that since an etching is an abstract or epitome of nature, for which greater power of *selection* is needed, the mere exercise of selection, if thoroughly well done, implies a certain mental superiority; and that this faculty of selection being less needed in elaborate work, and hardly exercised at all in very imitative and literal painting (of which we have had much in England), the elaborate art may in a certain sense be less noble than the abstract art. This idea may be readily illustrated from literature. Suppose that a publisher gave a commission to a man of letters to compile a catalogue of all extant ancient Greek writings, the work would be laborious and the list would be long; but suppose that he gave a commission to another man of letters to make extracts from Greek literature illustrating some especial subject, as, for instance, Greek religious sentiment, and to group these extracts so as to make them throw the utmost possible light upon each other, would not the work here be of a higher kind, merely because the faculty of synthetic selection was called into play? The two views may be expressed with great brevity. According to the first, elaboration is greater than summary expression, as needing more knowledge; and according to the second, the summary expression is greater, as needing equal knowledge and more selection.

The truth is, that to make any summary really well, we must know a great deal more than can be visibly set down in it; and the knowledge of nature and art possessed by an accomplished etcher must always be much vaster in bulk than the concentrated essence he gives us. The difference between the critic and the atechnic lies in this—that the one infers the masses of knowledge from which the abstract has been made, and that the other does not infer them.

It seems to us a very erroneous view to consider a good etching as merely the rude skeleton of a work of art. It is not a skeleton, but a *résumé*. The difference between the two things may be illustrated from the practice of sculpture. Before a sculptor makes a statue he makes a sketch of the complete idea in modelling clay, and afterwards, for the larger and elaborated model, a framework or skeleton of iron is set up. Etchings do not answer to this rigid and formless skeleton,

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they answer to the first little model—the synthetic expression of the entire and living idea.

The necessity for rapidity in etching presupposes that the idea is quite ripe for expression. If the hand goes faster than the thought, the work will fail in the direction of unmeaning mannerism; if, on the other hand, the hand waits for the thought, and the thought comes too slowly, the work may be delicate and careful, but it can hardly have the look of free and passionate inspiration, which is the glory of first-rate etching. Now, there are many excellent and admirable artists who come by their beautiful thoughts in dwelling upon them, and to whom, therefore, slowness and even hesitation in execution are necessary. The method which is natural and right for them is elaboration, and consequently it may be wise in them to abstain from the etching-needle. We do not wish to imply that etching is above them, we mean only that it is unsuitable for them. In the same way there are authors who can write a powerful book, but cannot make an effective speech. Many of the best painters have etched very indifferently, or not at all.

In speaking of etching as a kind of artistic shorthand, we are quite aware that much might be said to prove that the process is also available for elaboration. For instance, several members of the English school have produced plates which are highly elaborate, and, in their way, very beautiful, especially Samuel Palmer (of whose exquisite art I would always speak with deep respect), Frederick Tayler, and Hook. But it seems to me that in this they have not insisted upon the especial and peculiar power of the art, and might have expressed their thoughts equally well in some other way. Then, again, there is that wonderful man, Jules Jacquemart, who has carried a refined kind of imitation so far in etching as to refute triumphantly the popular notion that etching cannot give light and dark properly, and is not suitable for delicate drawing; but still, perhaps Jules Jacquemart may have quitted, in some degree, the ground which peculiarly belongs to etching. It may be said that we are somewhat arbitrary and narrow in desiring to define etching as shorthand, since it is capable of just as much elaboration as any other kind of engraving, but the question always is, with reference to an artistic product, *Could it be done in any other way?* If it could, it is not

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genuine in its own kind. A pure and genuine etching cannot be imitated by any other process whatever, and the ideas and feelings expressed in it could not be so clearly expressed otherwise.

The atechnic reader is respectfully informed, that what is said here[1] of etching does not refer to Dry Point, which is quite a distinct art, though often made auxiliary to etching in the progress of a plate. A very ludicrous instance of the blunders made by atechnic reviewers occurred a little time ago in a Scotch paper, where an illustration to a recent work on the art was criticised as an etching,—the fact being that there was not an etched line in it from beginning to end. In Dry Point the needle encounters great resistance from the metal which it has to cut. In etching it encounters no resistance, for here it has to cut nothing but a coat of varnish of the utmost possible tenuity, the copper being afterwards bitten by acid. Consequently etching is a much freer art than Dry Point, and nobody who knows the difference between them will expect the same qualities from both.

It might have interested us to trace the probable effects of the revival of etching upon the practice of oil-painting, but for the present this subject must be reserved. It may, however, be remarked that painting generally is becoming more synthetic, and rather more simple and direct in expression, than it was a few years ago. Nevertheless, artists will always be constitutionally divided into two classes, the men who resume their knowledge in rapid and direct work (however slowly and painfully they may *acquire* that knowledge), and the men who hesitate and linger in execution, and find that the longer they linger over a work the better it becomes. This difference being, as I said, constitutional, will divide artists into two camps so long as the world endures. Let us hope that the progress of a truly philosophical art-culture may enable each to see the merits of the other. The best etchers will always belong to one of these classes; the other may produce, as it does to day, painters of admirable refinement, and engravers of astonishing industry and skill.—1869.

[1] And elsewhere by the same writer.

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NOTE.

Etching is a most exceptional art in some respects; there is certainly no other product of human labour, except poetry, of which it is so difficult to foresee the condition in any future time, immediate or remote. It will add to the clearness of what I have to say on this subject, if I begin by establishing a distinction which is more necessary in these times than it has ever been before. We have now a school of etchers in France, founded chiefly by Leopold Flameng, though Jules Jacquemart and others have worked independently in the same spirit; and the purpose of this school is to interpret pictures upon copper by the processes of etching, in a more spirited and artistic manner, in a manner more perfectly in sympathy with the feeling of the painters, than was ever possible with the rigidities of line-engraving. These etchers work with considerable certainty and regularity, and, amongst other things they do, they keep the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* richly supplied with plates which often render pictures most intelligently. This school does not contain a single member who is at the same time known to the public and yet inefficient as a practical workman with aquafortis upon copper. All these men can draw, to begin with, and at the same time they are all able to do what they want with the copper, to make it yield that truth and harmony of tone as well as line without which it is wholly impossible to interpret an oil-painting satisfactorily. Flameng, Jacquemart, Rajon, Boilvin, Le Rat, Hédouin, Greux, Courtry, Laguillermie, and others are all efficient workmen in this kind of engraving; and there appears to be no reason why their school should not be indefinitely extended, for theirs is an art *that can be taught and learned*, if only the pupil has the capacity to see and understand what is essential in fine art, a capacity not exceedingly rare in any highly civilized European nation, certainly not rare in France. These then are the engraver-etchers, working from pictures painted by other men, and nearly always either in full tone or at least with a serious attempt to reach it. These men work with certainty, and if a publisher gives them commissions he may indulge in reasonable hopes that they will be executed. But, on the other hand, there is a class of etchers who attempt to produce original work in which the main purpose is the expression of some strong sentiment concerning life and nature, and here we find, instead of the teachableness of a trade, the incommunicability of an inborn gift; instead of a reliable professional skill, a

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discouraging uncertainty about results; so that the artist himself cannot tell whether or not the day's work may be worth anything when it is done. And, what is still more strange, it does not appear that etchers of this class either improve their workmanship by practice, or become any surer of their expression. Their power is a subtle charm, dependent upon a profound inexplicable harmony between a state of feeling and the subject which partly causes it and partly modifies it, and which in its turn is altered and transfigured by the temporary condition of the mind. Etching of this kind is really one of the forms of poetry, and it need not much surprise us that it cannot be produced to order; for who even amongst the most skilful and most cultivated poets has ever been able to produce good poetry in that manner? When Byron was sailing with Trelawny they came in sight of the islet of Lonza, at that time occupied as a prison by the Neapolitan Government. Byron became savage at the tyranny of the "jailers and hangmen of the detestable Austrian barbarians." Seeing him in a fine passion, Trelawny thought it a good time for the production of indignant poetry, handed him a pencil and paper, guarded him from interruption, and awaited the result. The result was nothing but doggerel, which Byron of course perceived, and said, "Poetry is a distinct faculty—it won't come when called. *You may as well whistle for a wind.*" And so it is with that kind of etching which, like verse, is a medium of poetic expression. You may prepare yourself by study so as to make success just possible for you, but you can never count upon success—no, not even in the perfection of your life and strength. It may come to you from time to time, but never at your bidding. *You might as well whistle for a wind.*

It appears to be inevitable also that in the etching which is used by men of genius as an expression of their personal thought and feeling, there should be a certain capriciousness or wilfulness of treatment. They may give you strangely powerful suggestions of light-and-shade, but their chiaroscuro is almost always arbitrary, and they rely mainly upon the free and significant use of the line, by which I do not mean outline, merely, but the organic markings wherever they may happen to occur. And even in the drawing of the selected lines which they *do* give there is *always* a certain inaccuracy, which inaccuracy is an essential part of their personal expression. There is the same difference between artistic etching and accomplished mechanical engraving that there is between the rapid handwriting of a cultivated author and the skilled engraving

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of the letters on a bank-note. The qualities of autograph would be sacrificed if mechanical exactness had to be attained at all costs; and there is this difference between literature and etching, that whereas in literature the thought of the author is seen even more clearly in type than in his own handwriting, it is not so in etching or in any kind of drawing, for here the autograph is a mental expression in itself.

The future of etching will probably be something of this kind. The school of etchers who copy pictures will become a recognized and rather important part of the art-life of Europe, but there can never be any regular production of original and poetic etching. From time to time some original etcher will appear, and be duly appreciated by a small but highly cultivated public, as Mr. Seymour Haden in England, Charles Jacque in France, or M. Charles Storm de Gravesande in Holland and Belgium; but the regular demand can never be supplied by men of this rarer quality, nor will such men produce with anything like commercial regularity. They will appear from time to time just as poets do, in an unaccountable way, and work quite irregularly, as poets always have worked and always must.

Before quitting this subject let me answer an imputation which has occasionally been made upon me by reviewers. It has been implied or affirmed, in different periodicals, that I had an unreasoning enthusiasm in favour of etching—a sort of passion which had taken possession of me during the last year or two, which made me incapable of seeing my favourite pursuit in its true relation to other branches of the fine arts. Now, the truth is, that from the earliest dawn of any artistic perception in my mind, the merits of this art have always been sufficiently clear to me for a sincerely respectful appreciation of it, that my first plate was etched in boyhood, and that I have been attracted to the art ever since by those great and valuable qualities which, in their combination, are quite peculiar to it. I may however confess, and do so willingly, that my respect for etching has always steadily increased in exact proportion with my knowledge of it, and has never been so great or so well founded as it is to-day. For of all the forms of art which can be multiplied, etching is the *only one* which is at the same time perfectly autographic, and yet capable of liberty, delicacy, and strength, each in its utmost perfection. There are dozens of processes which profess to reproduce the work of artists with exactness, there is not a single one of all these processes, etching alone

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excepted, which can copy a drawing that is both free, and strong, and delicate, without sacrificing some one of these three qualities. These are not questions of taste, merely, they are assertions capable of demonstration. It may be easily and briefly demonstrated, to anybody not too ignorant to comprehend an argument on a question of practical fine art, that the scale of etching from bass to treble far exceeds the scale of woodcut, and of all the processes which have been invented to supersede woodcut, and it is equally easy to show that etching far exceeds burin-work of all kinds in artistic liberty. The plain truth, indeed, is this, that every thorough *artist*, I mean every man who has at the same time knowledge enough, and feeling enough, to draw as artists draw and to care for what artists value, will find himself brought to etching quite inevitably, so soon as he desires to print a drawing by his own hand. He may believe in other processes first, and come to etching after many disappointments; but when at last he does come to etching, he will always discover that no failure can be attributed to the process, that all he desires to do has been done thoroughly by some master of the art, and that whereas in other processes disappointments have been caused by the imperfections of chemical or mechanical invention, here, in this art of etching, they are always due to insufficient mastery on the part of the artist, and to this cause alone.—1873.

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XXIV.

AMATEUR PAINTERS.

I.

Two very strong prejudices have long existed, side by side, with reference to the practitioners of the fine arts. It has, until very recently, been a received idea that an artist could not possibly be a gentleman, and it has also been a received idea that a gentleman could not possibly be an artist. In this way the word "artist" conveyed to the genteel mind an idea equivalent to "cad" or "snob," and the word "amateur" conveyed the idea of futile idleness. The consequences of these two prejudices were, that a man could not paint at all without incurring a certain amount of contempt (varying with the intensity of the prejudice), for either he was an artist and therefore a snob, or else he was an amateur and therefore an idle pretender to knowledge which it was not possible for a gentleman to possess.

Now, it may be frankly admitted, to begin with, that there existed strong foundations for these prejudices in the visible facts of life. In point of fact, artists very seldom were gentlemen, and amateurs very generally were futile triflers. The artists were (almost without an exception) men of very humble birth, and they remained illiterate; whilst, on the other hand, the amateurs were uneducated in art, and they never acquired knowledge enough to make their pursuit of it intellectually respectable. But it is easy to show that in this instance, as in many others, the facts which went so far to justify the prejudice were to a great degree the product or consequence of the prejudice itself. Since it was considered settled that an artist could not be a gentleman, men of gentle

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birth who were naturally endowed with gifts of the artistic order did not venture to give themselves the benefit of a regular training by openly entering the profession. On the other hand, though amateurship was permitted to gentlemen as a sort of safety-valve for artistic talent, the received idea that amateur art was merely an idle pastime, and could not be anything else, tended very effectually to make it so by steadily discouraging, in amateurs, the idea of study, and by encouraging ideas of specious facility and prettiness. The influence of the people who surround us, even when we really attach little importance to their opinions, is always very great. When an amateur is surrounded by people who look upon his pursuit as idleness, it is hard for him to make it anything else than idleness; when a man pursues a difficult study, whether in art or in anything else, he needs either some degree of rational appreciation of his effort in the people who surround him, or else, the secrecy of absolute retirement. The amateur painter had neither the one nor the other. The influences that surrounded him were unfavourable, and he could not escape from these influences. Literary studies may be pursued in great privacy, and this is one of their great charms and advantages: if you desire to read or write, you may shut the door of some private cabinet and work in uninterrupted peace; people don't come in and look over your shoulder, and give their opinion upon your unfinished essay or translation. But the student of painting is differently situated. The majority of amateur artists have hitherto usually been landscape-painters; and when they study out of doors, their friends look at their work in its progress and give their opinion, and, in short, exercise a sort of influence which is sure to be disturbing, and is generally sufficient to put the amateur out of the student-state of mind altogether. It unfortunately happens that a painter can talk, or listen, and paint at the same time, so friends come into the amateur's study at home, and chat with him as they do when they meet with him in the fields. Who are these friends? The friends of an amateur are usually persons in society who share whatever ideas may happen to be most prevalent at the time, and when the prevalent idea is the futility of amateur effort they surround their friend with this idea, and, as it were, bathe him in it, and paralyse him. The success of all labour, and especially of pure study,

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depends upon states or conditions of the mind quite as much as upon mental power. In a certain state of mind a man will study steadily and effectively, when in another state he, the same man, with the same mental powers and physical energies, will study inefficiently; and the wonderful and lamentable thing is that such very subtle, such almost inappreciable, influences are sufficient to throw us out of the efficient mental state into the inefficient mental state. The reader has often, no doubt, read about the manias of authors and musical composers—how one great novelist wrote best in a magnificent white robe, with a girdle of gold chains and utensils of pure gold: how another closed the shutters and lighted the candles in the daytime; how a third lay in bed to write; how a great musician dressed for his hours of solitary labour as if he were going to Court; and a hundred such instances of habits which had somehow connected themselves with certain mental states so as to have become necessary to the production of those mental states. But of all such influences there is not one so powerful, I may say so irresistible, as the companionship of living men. The doctrine which M. Taine has so steadily enforced, that the artist is the product of his time—of his century and country—is true; but in another and closer, and I think much more terrible sense, we are acted upon by the people who immediately surround us; and the worst of it is, that the people can influence us in regard to matters about which they know absolutely nothing whatever. The people about you may know nothing about art, yet influence your practice as an artist; and they may do this by their very ignorance itself, by gradually deepening the conviction in your mind that it is of no use to strive for a higher expression, since the higher your expression the less it seems to be understood; and that it is useless to toil for knowledge, since the more you know the more the gulf widens between you and the human sympathies you value.

The fatal way in which a strong social prejudice can bring about such a state of things as will seem to justify it may be illustrated by a hypothesis. I suppose there is no body of men in the world more generally accepted as gentlemen than clergymen of the Church of England, and there is certainly no body equally numerous which has fairer claims to such consideration. But, if society were to come to hold now, with reference to clergymen, the view which it formerly held about painters, that

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view would justify itself in two generations. The consequence of a general prejudice against the clerical profession would be a rapid lowering of its intellectual and social standards, and clergymen would soon become, what painters were, illiterate men of humble birth. So with the studies which clergymen have followed as an introduction to their profession, and which other gentlemen have followed for their own sake, the usual university course of classics and mathematics; if it were generally believed (as it used to be believed of painting) that these studies could not be seriously followed otherwise than professionally, the consequence would be that they would *not* be seriously followed otherwise than professionally. The beliefs of large societies bring about their own fulfilment.

The difference between society generally and the small thinking class on questions of this kind, lies here, that society uses "are not" and "cannot be" as convertible terms, whilst the small thinking class does not. It was true that amateurs were not serious students of art, but it was not true that they could not be. Setting aside the evil influence of constant companionship with people who did not take them *au sérieux*, the amateurs had fair opportunities for culture. They lost and neglected their opportunities; but they had them, if they had known how to make use of them.

The prejudices which severed artists from society, and divided amateurs from artists, are now happily very much weakened, and they grow weaker and weaker every day. Many artists are accomplished gentlemen, and are acknowledged to be so by everyone not behind his age; and at the same time, not a few amateurs have attained a degree of solid acquirement in practical art equal to that usually reached by members of the artistic profession. The number of clever amateurs who exhibit at the French *salon* increases every year, and it is not too much to say that no critic, however acute, could pick out the amateur from the professional works without the aid of the catalogue. Again, there is a considerable intermediate class between amateurs and professional painters, a class of men who study art seriously, who exhibit, and who are willing to sell when the opportunity offers, but who, being independent in fortune, do not paint for the market. The present writer has amongst his friends several artists of this class, whose works are received in the principal exhibitions.

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One such painter achieved a great and deserved reputation, and became an Associate of the Academy. Another, in France, lately received the decoration of the Legion of Honour. These men, a generation since, would have been prevented from serious work by the prejudices of the world. Several amateurs have lately distinguished themselves as etchers.

Nothing is more desirable for art than the extension of a serious practical amateurship, and I hope to show that amateurship of this kind is always attainable, even when the amateur has little time at his disposal. It is merely a question of going farther or not so far, but every amateur may study seriously so far as he has time to go. And when the amateur is master of his own time, as so many men in this rich nation are, there is no reason inherent in the fact that he does not work for money which need prevent him from studying as profitably, and painting as well, as professional painters whose natural gifts are no better than his own. Indeed, it is easy to prove that an independent amateur is more advantageously situated for study than a painter who has to be continually thinking about the money his work must bring.

II.

When a notion has long held possession of the popular mind, it will usually be found that it is not altogether without a *raison d'être*. It might be argued in favour of the two notions above mentioned that artists are illiterate because art is in itself a pursuit so absorbing that it draws off all the energies which are necessary to culture of other kinds. It might also be argued that art requires such labour and such devotion as no amateur would give even if he could, such as certainly no amateur can give who has anything else to do. Or, to put this idea in another form, a man can be a real painter only on condition of giving himself up to painting entirely, therefore a real painter must be ignorant of everything else; and if an amateur has the knowledge of another profession, or even the common accomplishments of society, he cannot be a real painter.

There is a great deal of truth in this, but it is an exaggeration of the truth, and the prejudices which are based upon the idea would be justified only if it could be accepted without

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deduction. It is true that painting makes large drafts on the time and energy of a man, but it is not true that a man cannot be a painter without sacrificing the whole of his time and the whole of his energy to that art. Consider a little the lives of the great painters, how variously accomplished some of the very best of them have been—men learned in the learning of their time, in one distinguished instance so far transcending it that the most learned men of our own age have acknowledged with wondering reverence the debts of the sciences to the far-reaching intellect of Leonardo. And, setting painting altogether aside, how few gentlemen are as fully accomplished in their own accomplishments as Rubens was. He was not illiterate; he was not deficient in the graces of manner. Considering his education purely from a literary point of view, his knowledge of languages and books was more than respectable; whilst in knowledge of the world, and in that kind of mental sharpening and polish which comes of intercourse with mankind, he was considered good enough for delicate diplomatic work, which is saying all that can be said. It is useless to argue this point farther, because it is a well-known and generally admitted fact, that the artists of the great time were remarkable for the variety of their accomplishments. In our own day several instances of the same variety have occurred. For example, Dyce, whose attainments were such that another man of extraordinarily large culture called him "the mortally omniscient;" and Leighton, whose knowledge of modern languages and of music is unusually thorough and complete. Ingres played the violin well from his youth; at the age of thirteen he performed with success a concerto of Viotti at a public festival at the theatre of Toulouse. Eugène Delacroix wrote admirable French; Leslie wrote admirable English. I could mention a living English sculptor whose range of scientific and literary acquirement is as much beyond an ordinary university education as the university education is itself beyond the knowledge of a young lady leaving school. If his knowledge of art and his manual skill were taken away from him to-morrow, his remaining intellectual possessions would still leave him intellectually very rich. Many other instances will occur to readers who have friends amongst the higher class of artists. Woolner wrote one of the most beautiful of modern English poems; Dante Rossetti is one of

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the most accomplished living poets. The only Englishman the present writer ever met who could speak *thoroughly* good French is a painter, and painters are more frequently acquainted with modern languages than men in other professions.

The argument from the accomplishments of painters in favour of amateurship is obvious. If an artist can be an educated gentleman, an educated gentleman can be an artist, if he has the natural faculty. It has been proved by many instances that the pursuit of art is *not* incompatible with culture of other kinds, and the idea that it is so furnished the strongest weapon to the hands of the old prejudices. If the idea of the incompatibility of art-culture with other culture were true—if it were necessary, in order to draw well or paint well, to be in all other respects utterly uneducated, no reasonable person would purchase art-culture at such a cost as that. It would not be worth the sacrifice. To take a very extreme instance: if any well-educated gentleman consented to become Turner—that is, to become a great painter utterly illiterate—he would make a fool's bargain. It would be like exchanging all the useful furniture in one's house for a gilt chair. Let us have what is necessary first, let us be able to spell and read easily, let us know the thoughts of great men in their own language; after that, let us educate our own eyes in the refinements of seeing.

The argument that an amateur with leisure at his command has not time to study painting seriously may be met by the reply, that since many painters have painted well in their youth it does not need a lifetime to learn the manual practice of the art. It appears to cost about seven years' labour, when the whole time is given, being equivalent to an outlay of about 14,000 hours. This is a great outlay of time; but suppose the case of a youth who inherits a fortune, and, having finished his university education, takes to studying art as an amateur. He may expect to paint well at the age of thirty, if he goes through the regular training, and at thirty a man is still young. This, however, supposes the most ambitious amateurship, that which aspires to paint pictures. There are various gradations of less ambitious but equally serious amateurship, which do not require so considerable an expenditure of time. Suppose the case of an amateur who confines himself to drawing, not

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It takes ten hours' walking to climb a mo
nd feet high.
I have been walking ten hours.
I have climbed fifteen thousand feet.
what if, instead of walking ten hours in s
lift you most rapidly above the sea-level, y
g ten hours at precisely the same height al
d not one hour, would not half an hour, of
you higher?
street fiddler has spent quite as much time
ill have spent thrice as much time) in viol
best pupil at the Conservatoire. But the st
the better violinist of the two. And so in
t of labour, you have the men who climb
do not—the majority do not. It is a differer
stitution. Suppose the case of an artist
hing at twenty-five, and is now sixty years old
of the years between twenty-five and sixty?
monest illusions about the employment of tim
pations is that it makes us every year a grea
he subject; but if you have been spelling ba
, it does not follow that you are an au
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find time for the study of the figure; e
mal-painters, though nearer to figure-painters

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scape men are, study the figure imperfectly. But we may go very much farther than this. A landscape-painter, celebrated for one kind of scenery, often finds such difficulty in getting leave to paint another kind of scenery that he is virtually fastened down to what he is best known for. An animal-painter may get fastened in the same way to one or two kinds of animals, and be a horse-painter, or a dog-painter, or a painter of cattle and sheep. And it is found that when a painter has got into habits of manufacture, he does not paint the one or two pictures he is known for any better for having painted them repeatedly. When the stage of manufacture is reached—and it is reached by many painters very early in life—a habit of work is formed very like the habits of our ordinary existence; and just as we do a hundred things every day of our lives, doing them neither better nor worse than ten years ago, so when the production of a certain class of picture has become a habit, the artist will go on producing that class of picture without acquiring either new skill or fresh experience. The reader thinks, perhaps, that this may be because such artists do not go to nature; but the curious fact is, that even in studies from nature, by men who never abandon the practice of making such studies, precisely the same stoppage and repetition may be observed. Thackeray observed it and described it in the case of "Pipson, historical painter:"—

"Pipson returns from abroad, establishes himself, has his cards printed, and waits and waits for commissions for great historical pictures. Meanwhile, night after night he is to be found at the old place in the academy, copying the old life-guardsmen—working, working away—and never advancing one jot. At eighteen Pipson copied statues and life-guardsmen to admiration; at five-and-thirty he can make admirable drawings of life-guardsmen and statues. Beyond this he never goes."

It appears, in short, that the mountain of art is not, for most men, a needle of prodigious altitude, but a sort of table-mountain, steep enough at the sides, but accessible, and not so *very* high. Once on the top, the climber finds himself on a flat plain, where he walks about at his leisure. This, of course, is not the received theory about art, and no doubt the "Excelsior" ideal is more poetical, but I maintain that my table-mountain theory answers to the fact in the large majority of cases. The natural art-talent of most men is so limited that it soon reaches the largest development it is capable of

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The geniuses of course go higher; they may perch themselves ultimately on their Alpine *aiguilles*, but the real geniuses are very rare, and a man may reasonably desire to paint, and may paint interesting pictures, without being one of them.

Having known not a few artists, I may observe farther, that they are not so indefatigably industrious as they sometimes pretend to be. Some of them are hard workers, but for the most part they take it easily, which may be accounted for by the rapidity with which the freshness of the artistic perception is lost, and by the dread of doing bad work. I don't wish to imply that artists are lazy: when they dawdle and waste their time, it is not generally from laziness, but because nature tells them that the inward mirror is dulled. One of the most distinguished painters who ever lived told me that, in his opinion, three hours a day was about as long as a painter ought to work in colour; and if a really strict account were kept of each painter's time—an account, I mean, deducting every minute spent in different kinds of rest and recreation—it would be found that many of them do not work more. One of my painter friends is a numismatist, and a passionate collector of antique marbles and bronzes. He has two or three cabinets of these objects in his studio, and it is perfectly certain that out of the six hours which he spends there every day, at least three are agreeably passed, in fragments of twenty minutes or half an hour, in handling his beloved collection, in gently brushing away the earth from some recently-found coin with a soft toothbrush, in trying to read illegible inscriptions, or in caressing and admiring the fine medals which are the glory of his cabinet. Yet my friend's theory, of course, is that he paints six hours a day; and if you were to suggest to him that it might be wiser to concentrate his work as an artist into a steady sitting of three hours, and then go out and take exercise, he would tell you that he worked at his painting all day long. By simply working hard when he does work, an amateur might paint as much as my friend does, and still find leisure for the duties of society. When we have little time to bestow on our favourite study, the great art is to learn how to make the best of it. This is the true secret of successful amateurship. Artists whose whole time is at their disposal for painting, may afford to waste some portion of it; but when an amateur has only three hours a day to give, he must stick very close to his

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easel for those three hours. A part of the same great secret is to choose such work as may be most improving to us at each stage of our progress, and here the amateur has a very great advantage over the professional artist. The professional artist is very often obliged to abandon self-culture for mere production, in order to earn money. I know a professional landscape-painter, who, being bound down by a set of commissions which he could not afford to refuse, spent several years in his studio, making a fortune, when his artistic instincts made him long to refresh himself by new study. The amateur, who is never bound in this way to mere production, can always make use of the time he sets apart for art in the way most directly profitable to him as a student. Another part of this invaluable secret, and another privilege of the amateur, is not to pass on to a difficulty before the difficulty which naturally precedes it is overcome. Artists are often compelled, by the necessity of conforming to the public taste, to attempt things which they know and feel they are not prepared to accomplish in a really successful manner, but which they must do well enough to be in the prevalent fashion: as, for instance, a landscape-painter, finding that landscape does not sell, may feel compelled to attempt figure-pictures, knowing himself to be insufficiently prepared; and very much of the imperfect work done by artists is attributable to pressure of this kind, from which, of course, the amateur is altogether free.

The great reason for hoping much from serious amateurship is, that although the amateur may have less time to give to art than the artist gives, that time is absolutely at his own disposal. The amateurs of the last generation did not bring amateurship into contempt so much because they had not time to do better work, as because they threw away the time they did give in such an irrational manner. They never would condescend to learn the art step by step; but either from pure ignorance of what was difficult and what was less difficult, or else from the ridiculously vain expectation that they would overcome the difficulties by sheer force of genius, they dashed at once at the most arduous artistic enterprises. These delusions are now in a great degree dispelled; a sounder amateurship is establishing itself on a firmer basis, and with more reasonable expectations. For this sound kind of amateurship we have great sympathy and good hopes. It will involve no loss of

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time, for every step in genuine culture is worth attaining for itself, even if we cannot go farther; and instead of being one of the most disappointing of amusements, it will become a valuable and invigorating discipline.—1869.

NOTE.

Since writing this paper on amateurs, I have taken note of everything which might throw additional light upon the subject, simply to ascertain whether it was right to encourage any amateur in the hope that he might be able to paint, ultimately. I find that no artist can ever be brought to believe in this possibility. Every artist affirms that the mere necessity for manual skill is of itself enough to preclude successful amateurship, whilst the difficulties of colour (artists invariably affirm) require the sacrifice of the entire existence. On the other hand, those artists whose judgment does not seem to be affected by the sentiment of professional jealousy, are always ready to acknowledge that an amateur who has the artistic gift by nature may attain true skill in black-and-white art—in charcoal-drawing, for instance—or in etching. Now there is a simple practical rule which may always preserve an amateur from a fatal waste of time. Let him divide the art into the three progressive stages of line, light-and-shade, and colour, beginning with the line (as the best etchers use it, I mean what we call the organic markings), and not leaving that for full light-and-shade until he has attained unquestionable proficiency, afterwards remaining in tone-drawing till he can do that indubitably well, and finally entering colour by very quiet colouring indeed, avoiding as much as possible what are known to be the great difficulties. To illustrate what I mean, let me observe, by way of example, that the management of red in sunsets is very difficult, because red cannot be made very light without destroying its chromatic quality, so that the light of a red sunset can only be suggestively got by cunning artifices beyond the reach of the amateur; whereas, on the other hand, any amateur who has mastered light-and-shade can soon paint a yellow sunset so as to make it luminous, because yellow does not lose its chromatic quality by mixture with flake white.

The whole principle of prudence in amateurship is to advance to nothing without having made sure of the step that ought to have

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preceded what is attempted. If this rule were invariably followed, there would be no very painful disappointments, and not much waste of effort. There is etching, for instance, which is drawing upon copper, and just now a host of amateurs, all over Europe, are trying to etch when they cannot draw upon white paper. If they cannot draw on paper, it is a matter of certainty that they will be unable to do anything on copper, for the latter presents all the artistic difficulties of ordinary drawing, with most serious technical difficulties *par-dessus le marché*. The application of the rule given above is also possible in matters of detail. There are always two ways of presenting a subject, one which is easier for the artist, and the other which is more difficult; and a prudent amateur, or a prudent artist in his early practice, will avoid as much as possible all difficulties that he sees to be avoidable. Unfortunately, however, we never know what is difficult and what is not until the lesson has been inculcated by experience. On this point my recommendation to the amateur is, to make the acquaintance of some old painter, get him to be sincere, if possible, and then take his advice. But the following general observations may be of some use in the absence of such a friend:—

1. A subject can hardly ever be too simple, or have too little material, provided there is an artistic subordination in the material. It constantly happens that there is matter for several good pictures in one bad composition.

2. Beauty of colouring does not depend upon the number of colours or their brilliance. It depends on the harmonious arrangement of a very few masses, with delicate contrasts and interchanges to relieve the eye.

3. The combination of bright colour with bright light is always a matter of prodigious technical difficulty, and may be easily avoided.

4. All intricacy and perplexing subdivision of material are difficulties, consequently it is prudent to choose rather the effects which obliterate intricacy and detail than those which exhibit them.

5. It is easier to paint an object in plain daylight than in sunshine, and in pure white light than in coloured light.

6. There are easy and difficult textures. The easiest are surfaces that are plain and firm without being shiny; the most difficult are surfaces in which there is a trouble in making out the precise limits of the exterior. For example, plaster-of-paris is an easy texture to imitate, but a cloud is very difficult.—1873.

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XXV.

CAN SCIENCE HELP ART?

VERY eminent artists and critics may be named on each side the question, so that one cannot express an opinion without placing himself in opposition to distinguished men. The best way in cases of this kind is to express one's own sincere, personal, individual opinion, without deference to this or that authority, since the authorities on each side are equally weighty. I will begin, then, by answering the question in my own way, and after that develop or amplify the answer.

1. The efficiency of an artist depends, in a great measure, upon his vivid recollection of organic form, and of effect.

2. Scientific knowledge enables the memory to retain organic form and effect with a precision not otherwise attainable.

3. Therefore, scientific knowledge helps the efficiency of an artist.

The argument on the other side is this (I will do my best to state it quite fairly): Science can teach things to an artist which are artistically easy, but fails him in what is artistically difficult. For example: perspective can teach how to draw the straight edges of a London causeway, but not the curves of the sea-shore; anatomy can teach the places of bones and muscles, but not the subtle variations of surface and of line on which the living energy of the animal depends for its expression. Scientific theories of colour can teach the relation of primaries, secondaries, tertiaries, but never the relations of the indescribable tints; and all the tints of a great colourist are of the indescribable kind.

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The whole of this is true. We may even go farther than this, and admit that Science teaches nothing whatever that belongs especially to Art; nothing, that is, in the true and deep meaning of the word, *artistic*.

Still, the sciences of perspective, optics, anatomy, are useful to artists; just as the science of geography is useful to a traveller. Take the very best of maps. What does it tell you of the country you intend to explore? It is not a substitute for your observation as a traveller, but simply a reliable informant as to where the places lie, where you will find them, and a help to your topographic memory. After having studied the map, you must observe the country itself, in all its detail, if you want to know its *life*. But the map has helped you, nevertheless, in the arrangement of the work before you. It has saved you time and trouble, it has prevented you from missing your way.

What a map is to the traveller, scientific study, wisely pursued, is to the artist. It can never serve him as a substitute for his own observation, but it may tell him where to apply his power as an observer, and guard him against innumerable mistakes. If artists could always have nature before them, exactly as they desire to paint it, they might dispense with the help of science altogether. Any artist who sees quite clearly in the artistic sense, sees also as much of organic structure as is necessary to his perfect performance. But when nature is not present, or is constantly changing, which very nearly amounts to the same thing, artists need everything which may counteract the natural infirmity of the memory. The degree to which science can do this may be easily demonstrated.

After we have dissected a plant, with the help of any really good work on botany, the organic structure of the plant, and even such characteristics as its colour, the season of its growth, and the places which it prefers, are engraved on the memory permanently. These things are not art; they do not describe the artistic appearance of the plant, but, by the association of ideas, they recall its artistic appearance, when that has been previously studied from nature. They present a sort of skeleton of knowledge, which the purely artistic memory clothes with the perfect life.[1]

[1] It is customary to speak of anatomy, botany, geology, as separate sciences, and a notion is thereby conveyed that the sciences are too numerous to be accessible to an artist. In reality, these three sciences are one,

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There are instances of artists who, having been attracted by scientific study beyond the sphere of art, have lost the artistic spirit, and become purely scientific. Thus science *may* ruin an artist, but not when the artistic spirit is really strong in him. Science did not spoil Rembrandt's work, nor has it spoiled Landseer's. I could name half-a-dozen painters who have been ruined by science, but they were all men of feeble artistic gifts to begin with. A man of any native artistic force works as freely after scientific training as before it. The scientific training helps his memory of things, but does not chill or harden his work. A man may write easily and poetically, without a trace of pedantry, *notwithstanding* his knowledge of grammar,—and grammar, like botany and geology, is one of the branches of anatomy.—1870.

Botany and geology *are* anatomy. Botany is primarily the anatomy of plants, and geology the anatomy of the earth. And anatomy, in any of its branches, is nothing more than the separation of anything into its component parts.

Now, there is a very curious characteristic to be noted in the classical spirit, in the spirit of classical tradition in the study of the fine arts. It admits one of the branches of anatomy—that of animal form—as necessary to the artist, but does not admit the necessity of the other branches of anatomy. This may be accounted for by the classic love of the human form, and the classic disdain of landscape; and I believe it may be asserted, with little fear of any effectual contradiction, that whenever modern artists have been deeply and seriously interested in the study of anything in nature, they have, as a rule, thankfully accepted the help of science with reference to that particular thing. For instance, Rembrandt did not disdain the anatomy of the human body, nor Landseer the anatomy of dogs, nor Ruskin the anatomy of mountains. The disdain of science always seems to apply to things in which the artist is not specially interested, and we commonly find that figure-painters consider the anatomy of plants superfluous, but not human anatomy.

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XXVI.

PICTURE-FRAMES.

THE force of routine, in all matters which concern the working of the common trades, offers such a steady resistance to innovation, that it is almost useless to suggest any reform which would involve the practical abandonment of a trade already learned and in the full tide of an assured prosperity. Picture-frames are made admirably well, and they succeed admirably in the object for which they are intended; that is to say, they show a picture to the best possible advantage. They have two faults; but these faults, instead of diminishing the prosperity of the trade, positively go far to increase it, whilst they injuriously affect only the pocket of the man who buys the picture, or that of the unsuccessful or partially successful artist, who often has pictures left upon his hands.

These two faults are costliness and fragility. A picture-frame of any magnitude is an expensive thing, and, at the same time, one of the very worst investments of money that it is possible to imagine. The ornaments are made in a kind of paste glued upon a wooden frame-work, and then gilt. A very slight shock is sufficient to break them off, for the paste becomes exceedingly brittle with time; and if there is any extra heat—as, for instance, if you hang a picture over a chimney-piece—the mouldings are apt to curl up and detach themselves without the help of any shock whatever. Then the gilding, though extremely pretty when perfectly new and fresh, loses its beauty very rapidly; so that, even in galleries possessed by the very wealthiest owners, the idea of keeping picture-frames always perfectly clean and beautiful has to be aban-

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doned as impracticable. In the country, it is possible to keep them decent a little longer; but even there it is difficult, if the climate produce abundance of troublesome flies: in an English town, however, especially a manufacturing town (such as Manchester or Leeds), the only way of keeping your frames decent without extravagantly frequent regilding, is by covering them with gauze, which, so long as it remains there, spoils both the frame and the picture. Works of fine art are not like things whose use is independent of appearances. For example, you may put a cover on an easy-chair without diminishing its usefulness as a thing to sit comfortably in; but as the only usefulness of a picture-frame is one of appearance, you absolutely arrest the performance of its function in the world when once you have hidden it. If picture-frames are to have gauze over them, we might as well begin by simply painting them a dull yellow.

The inconveniences to owners of pictures which result from the prevalent system of frame-making are, that an amount of dirt has to be tolerated in frames which would never be tolerated in any other piece of furniture, whilst a constant drain of expense has to be going forward, which, if it could be more wisely administered, might give results of higher and more permanent beauty. Considering, however, that the purchaser of many pictures is of necessity either a rich man who has money to throw away, or an extravagant one, who throws it away without troubling himself about questions of economy, he does not feel the perishableness of frames as a matter seriously affecting him. On the other hand, the successful painter gets rid of his pictures so quickly that a frame has not time to lose its freshness whilst it remains upon his hands; besides which, he can easily stipulate, and often does so, that the frame shall be a separate transaction between the purchaser and the frame-maker. And in any case, if a successful painter has to keep a few old frames in his studio, they serve him to paint other pictures in; and it matters little, when they are used for that purpose, whether an ornament be chipped off here and there, or the general tone of the gilding be somewhat dimmed by ineradicable dust. Those who suffer most from the extreme perishableness of the frames commonly in use are the ordinary crowd of artists, whose pictures are frequently refused at the exhibitions, and are sent from one exhibition to

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another, till one out of three or four is sold, and the rest come back to their author. The frames of pictures declined at the Academy are *always* damaged; sometimes they come back in a state so extremely unlike their splendour in the month of March, that the comparison which suggests itself the most readily is that of a spruce and brilliant soldier at a review, and the same soldier ragged and dirty after a disastrous battle. All artists complain of this, but the fault lies with the system of frame-making, not with the authorities of the Academy. The pictures are knocked about by agents of artists who go to seek for refused works; and as the ornaments are as fragile as porcelain, a considerable amount of damage is quite inevitable.

A system of frame-making is needed, by which it might be possible to preserve the good appearance of our present frames when they are new, whilst giving greater strength and durability. Some attempts in this direction have been made of late years which may be alluded to. The reader will probably remember the massive frames of carved wood which surrounded Bierstadt's great landscapes when they were exhibited in this country. These were much stronger, no doubt, than the ordinary frames of paste, and were handsome things in themselves. As a cornice for some room, richly furnished in carved wood, they would have been very noble and appropriate; as picture-frames, they had the radical vice of not showing the picture to advantage. In our schemes of reform we must not lose sight of the fact that the function of a picture-frame is purely auxiliary, and that if it fail to be an efficient auxiliary to the work of art it does not signify how beautiful it may be in itself. Many experiments have been tried, but nothing answers so well as gilding. No carved wood helps the appearance of paint as gilding does. The metallic lustre of gold saves it from injuring the tones of paint which might dangerously resemble it, so that there is never any struggle between them; whilst, on the other hand, there is a pleasant warmth in the colour of gold which silver does not possess. An immensely important collateral advantage is, that gold adds to the *splendour* of a work of art more than any other surrounding. The frames of Bierstadt's pictures, though they were magnificent things, were not splendid things; and a picture-frame ought to be splendid. On the other hand, we have had the pre-Raphaelite experiment in frames—a flat margin, often of solid oak, gilded so as to leave

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the grain visible. In Mr. Hunt's Temple picture a margin of ivory intervened, which, though useful as adding to the peculiarity of the work (which was an essential part of the pre-calculated effect on the public mind),[1] and useful farther in conveying the idea of sacrifice to the spectator, did not add anything to the artistic effect of the picture, except by separating the painted gilding of the Temple from the rivalry of the real gilding of the frame. The ivory, in short, though more expensive, had only the effect of so much paper of the same tint of white; and it has long been a settled question amongst artists, that oil-paintings are better helped by having gilding close to them than any kind of white or cream-coloured or black margin. The chief defect, however, of the pre-Raphaelite frame was its want of illusory effect, owing to its flatness. The preliminary idea of all picture-frames is the open window, or the bevelled boards that surround the diorama. Although we know that the *trompe-l'œil* is not the object of art, still a certain concession is made to the infantine or instinctive desire to be deceived. The frame, by the recession of its sloping sides, leads us first to the foreground, and then to the successive distances of the picture, preventing the perpendicular lines on each side of the *canvas-stretcher* (or stretching frame) from contradicting the pictorial distances, and so helping to produce the degree of illusion which is right and necessary even in the most elevated art. A flat frame does not sufficiently achieve this (though it achieves it partly), and consequently it misses much of the utility of the typical picture-frame. For the typical picture-frame is not only a margin, but much more. It is to the action or scenery in the picture what the walls and side-scenes of the theatre are to the acting and scenery upon the stage.

The American carved-wood frame and the English pre-Raphaelite frame, though both much more durable than the

[1] This passage has been very widely misunderstood. I intended to convey no unfavourable reflection on Mr. Holman Hunt. Of course all works of art are arranged with a pre-calculated effect on the public mind, as a lady's dress is, or the interior of her drawing-room. This is quite right and innocent; and if an artist concerns himself with a frame at all, it is inevitable that he should think of its effect. Mr. Hunt's frame added to or harmonized with the originality of his picture, so that its eccentricity is to be approved of, but for reasons given above that style of frame is not on the whole the best adapted for helping pictures generally, as works of art.—1873.

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frames we are usually accustomed to, could not, therefore, be considered as a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. What we want is a kind of frame which shall show a picture as well as the best frames of the ordinary kind, and yet be sufficiently durable to bear dust and coal-smoke, and even a little occasional hard usage in the exhibitions. I have no pretension to be able to suggest any satisfactory solution of this difficulty; indeed, I do not proffer, but ask for a solution. Something, however, may be said as to the direction in which the solution will have to be sought.

The frame *must* be gilded—that is imperative; or, if not gilded, it must look as if it were. It would be interesting to know for what price the ornaments of a frame, or of some of its mouldings, might be done in electrotype, and what gilding of sufficient thickness would cost by the same process. Or, perhaps, the comparatively new compound bronze of aluminium, which is extremely like gold in colour, and can be easily cleaned, would supply the material which we need. Wood-carving, gilded afterwards, is too expensive for ordinary use, besides being brittle, though not so brittle as the common paste. A plain frame of wood, well recessed, and *plated* with bronze of aluminium, might show a picture to advantage, and still be durable and easily cleaned. Projecting ornaments, or the kind of bold carving common in Italian frames, are not at all necessary to the effect of a picture, and are merely a sort of exuberance of Southern taste and invention. We can dispense with these easily enough, but we cannot dispense with the deep recess, nor with the effective contrast between dead and burnished gold. It is clear, that if any ingenious inventor could make for us frames which should be as easily cleaned as silver plate is, and as little liable to injury, we could afford to pay for them at least twice what we pay for the present perishable frames.

The best models, of modern frames, which have come within the writer's experience, are those of M. Bourdon of Paris, who was a painter before he took to the business of frame-making, and who therefore learned what was the utility of a frame as an auxiliary to the effect of a picture. Pictures look better, and more effective, in M. Bourdon's frames than in any others, except those of M. Chercuitte, who is frankly an imitator of Bourdon, and began his present style by simply copying the

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work of his master. The present writer has employed both these frame-makers, but they have a fancy for putting a wreath or border of laurel on the projecting edge of the frame, which has a pretty effect, but which detaches itself under the influence of damp or of heat, and which has to be removed if the frame is to last long in a trying climate. If we could have such a frame as one of Bourdon's best and most studied productions, in which the exquisite taste of the frame-maker is entirely subordinated to the effect of the picture—like a judicious accompaniment to a musical solo—such a frame as Bourdon's, with the additional virtue of durability, would be all that a painter or collector could desire. Surely, in the present advanced state of the industrial arts, this cannot be altogether unattainable.—1871.

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XXVII.

AUTOGRAPHIC ART.

In every art that conveys ideas it is important that the idea should be conveyed in its integrity, without diminution or alteration by the way. Absolute perfection in the conveyance of the idea is exceedingly rare, but there are a hundred degrees of imperfection, and it is well to be aware of them.

In literature the conveyance of the idea seems perfect. So far from losing in clearness by being printed, a manuscript positively gains, and it gains so much that some authors have their writings printed that they may correct them, not being able to see where the corrections are needed so long as the work remains in the obscurer form of handwriting. But even in the conveyance of literary ideas there are many shades of perfection. For example, our forefathers had a way of printing the letter *s* which differed from *ſ* so slightly, that, although we may be told what the letter stands for, we cannot read it without feeling that it casts a veil between us and the text. So it is with the old black letter; we may know quite well what all the letters mean, and yet be incapable of reading a book in black letter without feeling a lack of perfect light. It is not enough that the letters have been explained to us; nothing but life-long habit, and daily habit, can give us absolute clearness. Even such a purely material thing as the paper affects the conveyance of ideas. If the present essay were printed on dingy, bad paper, two hundred years old, the reader would be sensible of a disguise. Authors who understand their art have an objection to every peculiarity of type, binding, paper, which has anything like incongruity with the nature of the literary com-

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position, or which sets up a rivalry in interest. It is felt that even an ornamental letter is dangerous if the ornament has an interest of its own, and there are certain forms of artistic decoration so fatal to the written text, that a prudent writer would pray to be delivered from them. Borders of all kinds come within this category,—infinite artistic skill may be lavished upon borders, but authors dread them. Many authors, too, have a horror of being illustrated, or of having their poetry set to music; for even these marriages of the arts, natural as they seem, and customary as they have always been, produce associations in the public mind which are fatal to the singleness of the mental impression. No reader who has been in the habit of singing "Come into the garden, Maud," can read Tennyson's verses afterwards without hearing at the same time in his imagination the notes of the remembered music. No one who has bought Dante's *Hell* with Doré's illustrations need ever hope to get Doré fairly out of his mind again when he reads the Italian text. But the intervention of the printer, papermaker, illustrator, musical composer, however injurious to the singleness of the impression, is far surpassed in power for evil by the intervention of the translator. The translator is the personage most to be dreaded. In all literature that belongs to art, all *composed* literature, in which the art of expression is carried far, translation of any really accurate kind is so difficult as to be possible only for a sentence here and there which has its exact equivalent in the other tongue: for the rest, all that can be done is a sort of paraphrase. Young writers aspire to be translated, because it is a proof of some degree of success; but it is probable that few writers who have had that youthful aspiration realized can think of translations afterwards with satisfaction. The most conscientious of translators cannot alter the genius of his language, and the real difficulty is beyond remedy. And even when translation is not considered necessary, as in the case of books written in a language not at that time fully developed, but now read by people who use the same language in its maturity, there exists a veil between him who wrote and him who is now reading, which is the more deceptive that we are not always quite clearly aware of its existence. And if this is so for old books in our own language, it is so in a degree still greater for books written in languages which we have painfully learned, or half-learned,

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and which we translate for ourselves as we are reading. The best of scholars feel that there is a veil between them and the ancients, which the grammarians and lexicographers can never quite remove. And it might be a subject of somewhat grave reflection to all authors whose present rank in literature is such as to give them reasonable hopes for immortality, that as time gradually advances a mist will rise between them and the living world which, though it may add vaguely to the impression of their grandeur, will assuredly conceal much that a contemporary alone can quite clearly see or adequately appreciate.

All these obstacles to the perfect conveyance of ideas by means of literature have their very precise counterparts in the fine arts. The artist has to contend against the intervention of materials, and has often also to bear the intervention of interpreters. Many of his materials are very treacherous, and so soon as he desires to multiply his work, his artistic interpreters are not more to be relied upon than the translator of literary performances. There is even one department of fine art in which the original work is destroyed by the translator, who puts his own interpretation in the place of it. The draughtsman on wood knows that his work is to be destroyed by the tool of the wood-engraver, and therefore he works, on principle, simply to convey such hints to the engraver's mind that he, the engraver, may produce a sufficiently good cut. This habit of drawing for the wood-engraver has very curious effects, and is in itself a quite peculiar professional training. It is not every artist who can draw satisfactorily upon wood; there are artists whom the engravers like, because they find them intelligible and easy to interpret effectively; there are other artists who give much trouble to the engravers, and whose work costs great labour in interpretation, whilst it seldom turns out satisfactorily. These designers are usually loud in their complaints of the engravers; and it is true that their work is spoiled, which they can hardly be expected to bear with equanimity. A few of the most skilful draughtsmen on wood are satisfied with the rendering of their work. Gustave Doré likes to be engraved, and troubles himself about no autographic processes; but then, Doré has a vast experience of that peculiar kind of drawing, and is served by the best wood-engravers in the world, whom he has himself gradually trained to interpret him. I should think Sir John Gilbert and Mr. Birket Foster

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have little to complain of, either, if we may judge from the good quality of the many engravings that we know. But it is perfectly true that an artist who draws on wood is liable, as a general rule, to very vexatious disappointments. A first-rate wood-engraver *can* come very close when he does the work entirely with his own hands, and is in sympathy with the artist; but wood-engraving is carried on as a simple business, and blocks which bear the name of this or that engraver are in reality very often done by men or youths employed by him. The wood-engravers are often paid so inadequately that it does not remunerate them to do the work themselves, and it is done by assistants, with the benefit of superintendence only. It need not surprise us that many woodcuts translate the work of the draughtsman very imperfectly. All the fine arts are enormously difficult; engraving on wood is not an exception to the rule, it is a kind of engraving which can only be done really well by men of rare ability. Complaints of unintelligent interpretation are therefore exceedingly common. The sensation of being engraved on wood is very like the sensation of being translated into French: first, you have flattering hopes, then bitter disappointment, usually accompanied by considerable irritation; finally you resign yourself, and submit to what seems inevitable. This being so, it may be wondered how and why wood-engraving holds its place so well. A score of substitutes have been invented to replace it, and not one *has* replaced it; the illustrated newspapers still employ it exclusively, at least in England; the magazines use it far more than any other species of illustration; and when the *Graphic* was established a little time since, there was no hesitation between the old art and the substitutes which, in the opinion of their inventors, were to have replaced it years ago. Yet woodcut is not an autographic art at all, and some of the substitutes were strictly autographic. The question which interests us is, how it happens that a translation of which most artists complain should hold its place against autographic processes which would do away with the evils of translation altogether.

There are two distinct reasons for this. The first is that the wood-engraver is not *merely* a translator—he is something more; he is an elaborating, labour-saving secretary. Just as a man whose time is very precious marks in pencil on the back of his letters a word or two indicating the nature of the

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reply to be delivered, but leaves the work of arranging the form of it to his secretary, so the designer on wood washes in a shade with his camel-hair brush, but leaves the labour of making the lines which are to represent that shade to the cutter who comes after him. The economy of time which is effected by this is enough to settle the question from the pecuniary point of view. It would have been simply impossible for Gustave Doré to have completed all his designs, or half as many, had he been compelled to draw the lines with which his woodcuts are shaded. The wash of ink or Chinese white enabled him to communicate to the engraver a clear idea of the sort of shading that was wanted, and the engraver afterwards elaborated that shading at his leisure. This, at least, is the method pursued in the vast majority of instances; in a certain proportion, what is called engraving in fac-simile is resorted to, and then the artist works very much as if he were etching, the business of the cutter being simply to respect his lines, and cut away everything else. For the present, however, let us concern ourselves with the sort of wood-engraving which is *not* in fac-simile, but is interpreted and elaborated by the cutter. It is clear that the processes which have been invented to supplant wood-engraving could never possess its time-saving utility as regards the original designer. If Doré had to make all the lines which the engraver makes, he would feel the consequences of that error in economy so wisely reprehended by Sir Cornewall Lewis when he made his well-known maxim, "Never do a thing yourself which another can do for you equally well." The effects of an economical question of this kind on the pursuit or abandonment of a fine art are in the long run simply irresistible, unless of course the artistic drawbacks are so serious that good artists will not put up with them. Let us suppose that Doré had taken up an autographic process, such as Palmer's Glyphography, or the Beslay process, or the Graphotype, all of which were invented to supplant woodcutting, as their products can be printed with the text. Inexperienced people, who see nothing before them but the idea that it would be very advantageous to have the artist's own work, hope all things from these processes, and believe all things which are published in their favour. But the simple truth is, that the effects which Doré gets with the ink-wash on wood, and which are rendered, on the whole, by his engravers with very sur-

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prising fidelity, could not be got by Doré himself in any of the three processes above mentioned, or in any process of a like nature, so that a glyphograph, or a graphotype, or a design by the Comte process, although really quite autographic, would express Doré's ideas *less* perfectly than the woodcuts express them, though the woodcuts are nothing better than translations. The only really distinguished artist who occurs to me now as having much employed one of the autographic processes which can be printed with letter-press is Karl Bodmer, who has used the Comte process a good deal. I need not explain the detail of the Comte process; it is enough to say, that if the artist draws a line as in an etching, that line will be reproduced as in a woodcut. Now, I have no hesitation in saying, that although the Comte process is strictly autographic, the critic who judged Karl Bodmer from his work in that process (in which, be it remarked, the artist has all the advantage which perfect experience can bestow) would have a far less accurate idea of his power as an artist than if he had seen good engravings from Karl Bodmer's oil pictures. The Comte process is, I believe, sufficiently true to the line, and is useful in some publications on ornamental art; but for pictorial effect it is of such little value that it has led Bodmer into a system of uniform grey hatching entirely opposed to his natural spirit as an artist, as it is seen in his pictures and his etchings. Of the other processes the sole survivor appears to be the graphotype, which in the hands of an artist of ability would give good line drawings, but which cannot bear comparison with woodcut for work in full effect of light and shade, so that if Doré adopted graphotype he would have to abandon three-fourths of his work, that done with the wash, and give the other fourth only, that done with the line.

There is another autographic process, in favour of which I have written much already, the old art of etching upon copper by means of aquafortis, as Rembrandt did, and as many other great painters have done from generation to generation. Is it not much better to etch on copper autographically than to design for interpretation by engravers? It would be much better, no doubt, if the artist were a perfect master of the resources of etching,—but who is? There exists a vulgar error that etching is very easy, that anybody who can draw has only to go and buy a copper-plate and some etching-ground and

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acid, and set to work, and produce clever things immediately. This seems to be the prevalent opinion, even amongst people who from their experience of other branches of fine art might be expected to know better. But the real truth is, that the technical difficulties of etching counterbalance, in most instances, its advantages as an autographic process, and artists who attempt to etch very commonly find that the proof when it is taken does not say what they intended it to say. It is true that no living interpreter comes between the etcher and the public, but an inanimate interpreter comes between them, which is the acid. It would not be quite fair to reveal the secrets of the laboratory; but if people who talk of the facility of etching could only know how often even clever etchers suffer from the feeling that the work is not their own but a changeling, they would be both surprised and instructed. The very cleverest etchers living spoil plates in the biting, sometimes quite irretrievably, but more frequently so, that in letting the plate go they think, "This is not really my work, it is the work of that malicious fairy who is always making me say what I don't exactly think, but it may go for whatever it is worth." Ah, if we had all the wonderful resources of that wonderful art at command, as an engine-driver has the taps of his locomotive, then indeed should we have found full and adequate expression for our thought, better than any help of professional elaboration through copyism, but even then we should purchase the advantage at a heavy cost of time. Let it be clearly understood, however, that to dream of these great powers is idle, and that without them etching can give little and rare satisfaction as an autographic art. It may be doubted whether there are a dozen men in Europe, or half-a-dozen, who could translate a drawing in Indian ink in etching with accuracy as to tone; and until we can do that, there can be no question about the practical utility of the professional engravers.[1] I mean, that if a living painter paints a picture, and wishes to have it reproduced, he would

[1] Every year, however, is now adding to the number of skilful professional etchers, who are really engravers, engraving with the etching-needle and aquafortis; and these men, by constant practice, attain the mastery over biting which is necessary to an exact translation of tone. But etchers of this class copy pictures by other men, and their certainty does not prove anything in favour of the process as it is occasionally employed by painters. —1873.

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do better, as a general rule, to employ a professional engraver to engrave the picture rather than to attempt to etch it himself, although the etching would be autographic and the engraving only an interpretation by another hand. There are cases when another can express our thoughts more adequately than we ourselves. Just as a half-educated man finds that he can get his cause more justly and clearly stated by a more cultured representative, so an artist who is not master of the copper may be helped to fuller expression by the engraver who is.

In all that affects the conveyance of ideas we have to consider that the obstacles are usually various and often extremely subtle, so subtle that it sometimes requires a rather delicate power of observation to discover them. For instance, there is the reproduction of engravings by photography, which was hailed at the beginning with the exaggerations which commonly attend promising discoveries of all kinds. People were told that if they bought the photographs from Rembrandt's etchings, it would be as good as having the etchings themselves. But the truth is not quite that; the photographs are valuable as helps to memory, but considered as substitutes for the etchings themselves, they are very inadequate. They have not the quality of the printed lines at all, which need surprise no one who is acquainted with the processes, and besides this difference of quality there is a loss of quantity in labour. Very many of the lines are not properly rendered, so that where, in the original, you have a delicate close shading, in the photograph you have often nothing but a tint, whilst lines which have been deeply bitten and richly printed are apt to present the appearance of a blurred stain. The alteration in texture is enormous; nobody would take a photograph from an engraving for anything else but a photograph.

When we come to the photographic reproductions of designs of various kinds, we have, first, to observe that all designs do not come out equally well in the reproduction, and that it will probably be found prudent to design for the autotype in a special manner, or in one of five or six special manners, suited to that kind of reproduction. Oil-paintings generally come out badly, not only on account of the colour, which in translation by photography gives false tonic relations, but more especially by the loss of touch-character in reduction. Some artists like to see their work reduced because it looks more

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delicate, and the detail seems more abundant, but the loss in character much more than counterbalances these advantages, if they are advantages. Artists would do well to work for the autotype strictly on the same scale as the autotype reproduction itself, and in such material as will allow of the closest possible approximation in the copy. Manual expression always loses meaning in reduction; a line whose modulations are all visible on its own scale becomes deficient in accent on a smaller scale, and a piece of shading which is merely delicate as the artist drew it, becomes a confused mass in the reduced copy.[1] The best kind of drawing for autotype reproduction appears to be an ink-wash sustained by rather powerful pen-lines, or else simply a strongly-marked drawing in pen and ink. Even, however, where there is some considerable loss in the autotype process (and it cannot reproduce *all* art without loss), it is still nearer to a true autograph than an etching by anyone who is not quite decidedly a master in etching. And even when you have executed an etching which clearly expresses your idea, your communication with the public is not really direct, because there is the intervention of the printer to be considered, an intervention often quite as disastrous to the original work as that of the wood-engraver himself. There are printers who would make the plate look quite without effect, like a vigorous poem spoiled by a weak translation. What with treachery of acid and the ignorance or insensitiveness of many printers, a published etching is too often anything but an autograph.—1872.

[1] This is my private and sincere opinion, but I find that many artists like to see their work reduced, so no doubt reduction is beneficial in their case. It is also certainly much more convenient to have rather large and coarse work reduced to a small scale than to draw directly on a very small scale. If there is no reduction in the autotype process, the paper of the original drawing must be very smooth.—1873.

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NOTE.

The autographic processes have not turned out quite so satisfactorily in every respect as we had hoped for them when the discoveries were new. There are difficulties peculiar to each of these processes; for instance, the "mechanical process," though it will interpret a black line fairly well, in the manner of a woodcut, will not render a wash with any certainty, and most of the autotype processes are full of risk in the printing, so that good copies are selected copies. The Woodbury process is nearer in effect to copper-plate printing than the mechanical process, which prints (artistically speaking) with results that resemble woodcut as to depth of effect. All these processes are highly interesting and curious, but they are not practically so reliable as the old printing from engravings or even from drawings on stone. Heliotype engraving on metal appears to be the most reliable of the photographic methods, but there is a good deal of manual burin-work in the finishing of these plates; and when I say that the process is more reliable, I mean only because it permits the old-fashioned method of copper-plate printing. There is nothing in any of these processes to supersede first-rate engraving, but we may prefer, in many cases, the risk of inadequate interpretation and defective printing in autotype to the other risk of another kind of bad interpretation in engraving by inferior men.—1873.

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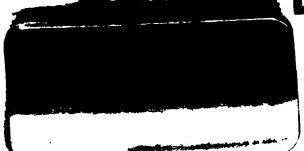

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